

A JOURNEY THROUGH "THE VILLAGE": LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE FULL-  
SERVICE COMMUNITY SCHOOL MODEL AT LEGACY HIGH SCHOOL

BY

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DISSERTATION

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## **Abstract**

There are many education reform models intended to close the achievement gap between different groups of students (i.e., students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, students of differing household income levels, students who live in rural versus metropolitan regions, etc.). Although not common practice, some education reformers have shifted toward designing models that make targeted efforts to recognize and combat the fact that educational realities and opportunities of students are differential based on a student's (and their family's) level of access to economic wealth and social capital. The full-service community school model is one education reform model that recognizes the urgent need to address health, social, cultural, and ecological necessities of students and their communities, which, if unaddressed, can impede students' learning and development and overall quality of life. Furthermore, this school model provides its students and the surrounding community with wraparound services, formed through partnerships between the school and community organizations, that are in place to mitigate the resource deficits that often plague high-need communities. Through a 9-month ethnographic intrinsic case study, this research engaged the Legacy<sup>1</sup> High School community in order to gain insight into how their school's full-service community school model is apparent in various aspects of students' lives, as well as the day-to-day organizational structure of the school. Although the full-service community school model is becoming an increasingly widely used school model, the research and published literature on this topic is limited and concentrated among a small collection of scholars. The primary purposes of this study are to understand the impacts of the full-service community school model through exploring its implementation at Legacy High School and contribute to the literature on this particular school model.

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<sup>1</sup> The name of the school has been changed to protect the participants of the study and any individual or organization mentioned.

***In loving memory of:***

My Aunt Gloria

*I don't think it's mere coincidence that through this work I found a piece of home in the place that you once called home. You are forever with me.*

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My Mommy

Pamela R. Nelson

*Your unconditional love and support has fueled every dream I've ever had. I am forever blessed to call you my mother.*

My Sissy

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*You are the day to my night.*

*God made us sisters, but our love makes us friends. We are the shortest decade I'll ever know. Thank you for your love and support.*

“Grimes Girls”

Granny (My Queen), Aunt Louise, Aunt Evelyn, Aunt Mag, Aunt Carolyn

*The most divine example of grace, excellence and humility.*

*Because you are, who am I not to be?*

“The Warriors”

*Thank you for welcoming me into your family. Thank you for entrusting me with your stories. Thank you for making me a better educator. You all will forever be a part of me. I am forever changed by our time together. In Orange & Black.*

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*To Ms. Barbara Jean Hawkins (Class of 1953)*

*I was never able to meet you, but I am grateful for who you are.*

*Everyday I walked those halls I felt like I was getting to know you.*

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## **Prologue | My Journey Through Legacy High School**

I equate the research process for this dissertation study to a journey because the many months I spent on the Legacy High School campus were not simply me arriving to campus in the morning to collect data and packing up and leaving my experiences behind me once I had completed writing my notes for the day. Instead, being at Legacy day in and day out, getting to know the Legacy family and community in such an intimate way, wholly shifted me as a person, as a Black woman, as an educator—as an intersection of all these categories. Each day I spent on site, I learned more and more about the youth at Legacy and the way the realities of their world shaped their experiences at school. I was able to contrast their experiences with the privilege of not having to personally face many of the hardships that are realities to them at such a young age—not even in my young adulthood. These reflections begged me to reexamine how I saw student engagement as well as how I viewed—and (implicitly) judged—student behaviors.

I learned about the educators that worked at the school and got a sliver of understanding how working at Legacy shifts and impacts them. What I saw, what I learned, and what I experienced while there were things that were incomparable to the things I experienced when I was in high school myself just over a decade earlier. For me, this time at Legacy was a journey toward more deeply understanding the way the things that we carry with us in our daily lives influence how we experience school, as well as how school experiences us. Through this data collection process, I learned just as much about myself as I did about my research participants and the full-service community school model at Legacy High School.

## **Chapter 1| Planning for the Journey: Introduction**

Schools that serve large populations of low-income families are often the schools that have limited in access to quality educational resources. Such resources include: fiscal and human resources available to meet the needs of school operation, updated books and quality learning materials, usable and safe educational labs, offerings of advance placement and honors classes, extracurricular options, and many other resources and opportunities that lead to a well rounded school experience (Ballantine & Hammack, 2009; Chesler & Cave, 1981; Coleman et al., 1966; Yaffe 2010; Kozol, 1992). Further, these schools disproportionately lack highly qualified teachers and experience high rates of teacher turnover (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2013). To students' detriment, these limitations often minimize the quality of education available to students who attend such schools. Attending schools with the abovementioned resource deficits is the common reality of students who attend urban schools that serve majority-minority populations and populations that have limited traditional forms of economic and social capital available to them to make up for where their schools are lacking.

Coupled with the educational resource deficits that schools in low-income areas often face are social and ecological issues that impede the full learning experience of students. According to a University of Pittsburgh study, as reported by the Yaffe (2010) of Education Testing Services' Center on K-12 Assessment and Performance Management, "57 percent of achievement stems from non-school factors" (Yaffe, 2010, p. 2). Not only do low-income school children suffer from academic resource deficits at disproportionate rates, many low-income students also face negative social circumstances that are indirectly influential to their schooling experiences. These circumstances include access to quality health and social services, nutritional

food options, positive social networks, and enriching social and cultural capital opportunities. High levels of violence and crime are also factors that are disproportionately coupled with poverty-stricken realities. Some of the consequences of poverty (i.e., less experienced teachers and lower-quality schools, high exposure to neighborhood violence, limited health resources, household/family structure instability, etc.) are common disadvantages that low-income students are subject to; these issues are sometimes by-products of living in and/or attending a school in a low-income community. Additionally, these factors influence the social and educational development of students in relation to their schooling experiences. Regrettably, communities that suffer from such high levels of concentrated poverty have high populations of students of color. Thus, the harsh realities of living in poverty not only impact individual students and families but also lend to the universal issue of the racially and economically differentiated social gaps.

For decades, some education reformers have been searching for ways to address the realities of our most underserved students, families, schools, and communities. While many traditional school reform methods are limited in the dimensions through which they assess students, one education reform method that seeks to simultaneously address the academic demands and social and environmental challenges that students and communities face is the full-service community school model (FSCS). The Coalition for Community Schools (2014) defines the full service community school as a school that provides students and their families access to the resources necessary for primary school engagement and academic excellence. Secondly, they define the community school as a hub of resources available to the larger community that will aid in making the community a more stable, supportive, and safe place to live. The FSCS model recognizes the urgent needs of underserved students and seeks to address health, social, cultural and ecological necessities of students, which, if unaddressed, can impede learning and



development. The full-service community school is a school organizational structure that provides its students and the surrounding community with wraparound services and certain forms of social capital by,

build[ing] partnerships with other organizations. And it stays open past the final bell of the school day, hosting after-school programs, internships, and neighborhood gatherings. Community schools build on the insight that low-income students often lack social capital, the network of relationships that support learning...What community schools do is recreate those connections...because they have universities and community based organizations and hospitals and families all working together. (Yaffe, 2010, p. 4)

The requirements for student success extend beyond the school walls. Partnerships between schools, families, and their communities are vital to student learning and development (Epstein, 2011). The community school model works to combat the negative effects of poverty and to contribute to academic improvement, as well as to increase student attendance and family and community engagement (Center, Rassen, & Gunderson, n.d.).

### **Problem Statement**

While scholars attribute various factors to student success, the dismal reality is that not all groups of students have equal access to the various forms of capital and requirements deemed necessary to succeed. Communities of color have historically been marginalized in both economic and educational institutions, thus limiting their access to the very things defined as necessary for success. Research shows that a number of these elements (as described in chapter 2) are disproportionately limited in schools and communities that serve high numbers of low-income African American and Latino/a students. Low-income students are most in need of quality resources in schools, yet they are often provided with the least (Darling-Hammond, 2010;

Kozol, 1992; National Research Council Institute of Medicine, 2004). Being subjected to economic, social, and race-related inequalities has long-lasting impacts on educational and social outcomes and must be mitigated to offer underserved communities equitable opportunities to succeed. Because of the systematic sources of inequality that are perpetuated through race, class, and income status, in order for disadvantaged students and their families to have access to the same possibilities as healthier and more privileged individuals, exposure to promising opportunities cannot be contingent on schooling (Basch 2010; Comer, 2009; Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002; Epstein, 2001; Epstein et al., 2001). Supplemental educational resources and experiences must be made available (Gordon, Bridglall, & Meroe, 2005).

### **Purpose of Study**

The full-service community school is one school model that is designed to mitigate the effects of ecological encroachments on students' personal and social development. The community school model, with its provision of wraparound services, recognizes the urgent needs of students who suffer from growing up in a stratified society, thus becoming victims of poverty and under-resourced schools (Center, Rassen, & Gunderson, n.d.; Dennis & Lourie, 2006). This school model provides an innovative vehicle for education, social, and health services to be provided to schools and communities to address the social distress that prevents positive and healthy engagement in school (Dryfoos, 1994; Goldman, 1967). Unlike the traditional school model, however, the full-service community school model provides "high quality K-12 schooling with vital services such as healthcare, preschool, and before- and afterschool care" (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 235) for students, parents, and community members (Yaffe, 2010; Epstein, 2010). Implementing the full-service community school model can help alleviate some of the roadblocks that students of color, and students from economically disadvantaged

backgrounds, often face that impede their learning. Furthermore, having full-service community schools in the neighborhoods within which these students live makes resources that might otherwise be difficult to attain available to their families and communities.

This dissertation examines how the full-service community school has been implemented at one public school, Legacy High School, which serves both a high-need student population and community. The study of this particular school was designed to examine how the designation of Legacy High School as a full-service community school is reflected in the academic and social experiences of its students. Further, this study explored how the community school model, as implemented at Legacy High School, is reflected in the school's social climate and culture as well as the school's relationship with the surrounding community. This study is limited to the examination of only one example of a full-service community school, thus it cannot be used to make overarching generalizations about the full-service community school model as an entire system. However, this study of a full-service community school example at Legacy High School will provide insight into the complex elements of life that students carry with them into the classroom, how those realities often influence their school experiences, and how the full-service community school model can potentially be used to mitigate those harsh realities. Additionally, this study of Legacy High School, in its functioning as a full-service community school, seeks to provide qualitative insight to education leaders, practitioners, policy makers, and reformers of not only the importance of recognizing and addressing the non-school factors that influence student learning but also the type of care, concern, and investment from various stakeholders that are vital to fully meet the educational needs of underserved students and their communities.

### **Introduction to the Study's Theoretical Frameworks**

This study of Legacy High School is rooted in three theoretical frameworks: (1) Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model of Human Development (1972), (2) Sarane Boocock's The

Learning Systems theory (1980), and (3) Tara Yosso's theory of Community Cultural Wealth (2005). Applying Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model of Human Development and Sarane Boocock's The Learning Systems theories, this research explored how Legacy High School's attempt to address the ecological infringements on the learning and development process is perceived by students and their parents, faculty and staff, and other Legacy affiliates. The human and student development theories of Bronfenbrenner and Boocock were applied to cast light on how individuals within the school setting are influenced by the environmental and social context. Additionally, these frameworks were used to frame this study to examine how the resources and experiences provided by the community school effectively or ineffectively mediated these issues. Further, through gaining a deeper understanding of how Bronfenbrenner and Boocock acknowledge a direct relationship between social setting/context of people's environments and their social development, this research explored how, if at all, the functioning of Legacy High School as a community school influenced the social culture and climate of the school and its surrounding community.

Because this study is situated in the context of both a school and community setting, it is important to understand the unique realities of the people and place being studied and how those realities directly influence the study's findings. To do this, this ethnographic research study was approached using Tara Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth theoretical framework. The theoretical lens of Community Cultural Wealth is a challenge, rooted in Critical Race Theory (CRT), to the traditional and often deficit-driven interpretations of the cultural capital (or lack thereof) held by communities of color (Yosso, 2005). Traditional approaches to cultural capital see communities of color and communities stricken by poverty as lacking in cultural wealth. This view of those communities assumes that cultural knowledge, traditions, teachings, skills, and

experiences from these communities lack value. However, using this framework, Yosso (2005) urges individuals, especially educators, to stop seeing students who come from communities of concentrated poverty as lacking in cultural capital. Instead, this framework urges the recognition that these students' experiences provide them various forms of capital (i.e, aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, etc.) that, although not traditional, are valuable assets in their own way and can offer students a unique set of strengths and skills sets.

### **Research Questions**

Using qualitative research methods, an ethnographic intrinsic case study was used to gain an understanding of Legacy High School's functioning as a full-service community school. Through this study, I explored how attributes of the full-service community school model were apparent in Legacy's practices around (1) academic development, (2) social development, (3) fostering the school's climate and culture, and (4) the school's relations with the larger community. These findings were explored through the following research questions:

1. What attributes of the full-service community school model are reflected in Legacy High School's practices around supporting students' academic needs and development?
2. What attributes of the full-service community school model are reflected in Legacy High School's practices around supporting students' non-academic needs and development?
3. What attributes of the full-service community school model are reflected in Legacy High School's culture and climate?
4. How is Legacy High School's functioning as a full-service community school reflected in its integrated relations with the larger community?

### **Gaps in Literature and Significance of Study**

Legacy High School has been the subject of several research studies. However, since

becoming a full-service community school in 2005, no scholarly (quantitative or qualitative) research has been conducted to examine and assess the influence that the use of the full-service community school model in particular is having on the climate and culture of Legacy High School and the surrounding community. Additionally, since 2005 almost all other schools in Legacy's public school district have undergone transformation efforts to become full-service community schools. Since then, there has been no research on the impact and/or effectiveness of specifically using the FSCS model at Legacy or at any other of the district's schools. Therefore, in this school's effort to reform the quality of educational experiences that it provides its students, it is important to maintain a continual review of the school's policy, practices, and programmatic efforts. The findings gathered in this study seek to lend to that evaluation process.

Quantitative data have provided evidence that schools that use the full-service community school model have made substantial improvements in academically related areas, including raising academic performance, reducing disciplinary actions, and increasing attendance and graduation rates (Coalition for Community Schools, 2014; Dryfoos, 2000). However, this study seeks to contribute to the minimal qualitative-based literature on the full-service community school model by gathering and documenting how people utilize, understand, and perceive the benefit and usefulness of community school resources. Additionally, this research seeks to document community schools' influence on the local community within which the FSCS model is being implemented. Furthermore, the findings in this study aim to provide the administrators, faculty, and staff at Legacy High School a better understanding of how the school and community members perceive the practices at Legacy, which will allow for more empirically motivated policy and program implementation.

## **Overview of Dissertation**

Chapter 1 of this dissertation first introduced the study by giving an overview of how factors that arise outside the confines of a school setting influence the social and academic development that transpires within schools. Second, the introductory chapter of this dissertation defined the full-service community school model and introduced the unique way that this model is implemented at one public high school, Legacy High School. Finally, chapter 1 introduced the theoretical frameworks that were used to frame this study, as well as the purpose, significance, and research questions that guided this work.

Chapter 2 of this dissertation provides a review of literature that discusses existing research on the ways in which outside factors influence the learning environment, background information on the community school model, and the relationship between schools and the larger community context. The review of literature will also provide a more in-depth explanation of the theoretical frameworks that were used to contextualize my thought processes and interpretations of information throughout the conduction of the study.

Chapter 3 presents the research design and study methodology, the data collection methods, and the data analysis process used in this study. Additionally, the methodology chapter explains how initial methodological approaches were flawed and then refined in order to more fully gain knowledge that would better address the research questions.

Chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation lay out the findings of the study. Chapter 4 gives an overview of the historical context of the study's research site and community and highlights the many preliminary findings. In chapter 5, the findings gathered through the ethnographic data collection process are organized thematically.

Based on the understanding and interpretation of the findings discussed in chapters 4 and 5, and grounded in prior scholarly work and theory, chapter 6 integrates this research into the existing body of work in order to understand where this work clarifies, differs from, and contributes to the existing body of scholarship on the full-service community school model. Once the research questions have been addressed, recommendations for educators and policy makers on how the full-service community school model can best be used for the educational experiences of students will be offered. Finally, chapter 6 offers overarching conclusions about this study and discusses how the findings will be used to initiate further research on the topic.



## **Chapter 2| The Almanac: Review of Relevant Literature and Theoretical Frameworks**

A person's ability to be successful in school is interdependent upon the social and ecological factors that make up the context of their life. Due to structural inequalities in American society, low-income communities and persons of color have disproportionately been denied access to many, if not all, of the tools some scholars regard as necessary for success. Unequal distribution of access to quality human services, social supports, and educational opportunities as a result of racism and classism has led to low-income Black communities not having equal access to the resources and tools that are necessary to reach their highest possible potential in social and educational development. The full-service community school model is both a school and community reform effort designed to mitigate the structural inequalities that impede human development and learning. Schools designated as full-service community schools provide educational, family, and social support services, typically all centrally accessible on the school's campus, that work in tandem to aid not only academic development of students but also growth and development of the entire community.

The purpose of this literature review is to address the significance of full-service community schools as a school reform model that is ideal in meeting the needs of students who suffer from impoverished and underserved realities. First, the literature reviewed will address the factors that influence students' success in school, specifically among low-income Black student populations. Second, this review will discuss the effects of poverty and stratification on school experiences. Next, the literature review will critique major educational reform policies and discuss how full-service community schools can be utilized as a model to mitigate unaddressed learning needs. Finally, the gaps in relevant literature regarding the community school model will situate this dissertation study in the field. Following the review of relevant literature, the

theoretical frameworks (introduced in chapter 1) that were used to inform this study's methodology will be presented in more detail.

## **What Students Need for Success**

### **In-School Elements That Influence Student Success**

Scholars have highlighted two prominent factors that contribute to the success of students within schools: teachers' quality and concern for students, and school and classroom culture and climate. Kennedy (2008) suggests classroom quality should examine teacher characteristics, attitude and disposition, and skills or practices, because these are important influences on student success. Furthermore, in recent education reform efforts, a great emphasis has been placed on the role of the teacher (Crabtree & Gordon, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Wenglinsky, 2000). Many scholars view high-credentialed, long-term teachers as the backbone of student success (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Contrarily, there is a subset of school reformers who promote alternative teacher credentialing programs, such as Teach for America and The New Teacher Project, and believe that school reform needs new, innovative teachers with non-traditional teaching backgrounds (Humphrey, Wechsler, & Hough, 2008). Trent (1990) and Delpit (2006) contend that in addition to proper training in their subject areas, teachers should also be concerned with competence in their students' cultural backgrounds and should work to better understand and address racial and class power structures in the classroom.

In a study that examined how social class influences the curriculum that students are exposed to, Anyon (1980) found that school curriculum and the way students are instructed in school settings reflect socioeconomic and social-class structures. In her study, she recognized that trends of rote learning were often geared toward students in schools that served working class families, but she noticed that critical thinking and self-guidance were encouraged in schools

that represented more affluent demographics. Her findings highlight that students have differential school experiences based on their ascriptive realities, such as race, class, and residency. Because of these differential school experiences, students who are not part of the dominant social and racial classes often tend to have limited experiences and opportunities in school, thus perpetuating social reproduction.

Brown (2004) interviewed thirteen teachers from seven U.S. cities and noted what teachers considered the hallmarks of a great classroom experience. Brown (2004) found that when teachers develop respectful, caring, and personal relationships with the entire student population, minority students will likewise achieve greater success within the classroom. Noddings (2002) also found that care shown between teachers and students can lead to positive educational outcomes. Irvine (1990) argued that successful teachers of minority students fostered non-hostile and non-repressive learning environments by displaying pleasant characteristics such as friendliness and transparency. Finally, Klem and Connell (2004) explained that teachers who engaged in more personal relationships with students reported that students benefited in the following ways: their students were less likely to avoid school and appeared to be more self-directed, more cooperative, and more engaged in learning. Despite these recommendations, Kozol (2005b) argues that poor students of color are more likely to attend schools with lower-quality resources and rarely get the opportunity to experience such high-quality teachers.

These elements of student success primarily deal with immediate factors that take place within the school setting. However, out-of-school factors such as living conditions, financial security, health and safety, familial support and stability, and a host of other issues create the context of students' lives and influence how they interact within and experience the school

setting. The literature reviewed in the following section will discuss the ecological and social factors that play a role in shaping students' school experiences.

### **Ecological and Social Factors That Impinge on Development and Learning**

This section examines three types of ecological and social factors that commonly affect student achievement: access to human and social services, physical and mental healthiness, and social and environmental characteristics. While lacking these factors can be detrimental to all groups, they particularly have strong negative impacts when coupled with concentrated poverty in Black communities. Lacour and Tissington (2011) define poverty as the extent to which individuals live without vital life elements, which include “financial, emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical resources, as well as support systems, relationships, role models, and knowledge of hidden rules” (p. 522). These elements of poverty effect individuals in various ways. Although poverty does not discriminate on race or creed, the Children’s Defense Fund (2014) reported that Black children were reported as the poorest of all in 2013. When negative impacts of ecological and social factors remain unaddressed in people’s lives, they have the potential to hinder quality of life and students’ ability to engage and excel in school (Birch and Gussow, 1970; Center, Rassen, & Gunderson, n.d.; Yaffe, 2010; Persell, 1979). Although these three factors (access to human and social services, physical and mental healthiness, and social and environmental characteristics) and their relationship to poverty are separated for the sake of this paper, they are all interconnected and impact students’ ability to excel.

**Access to human and social supports.** One effect of poverty is limited access to quality human and social supports needed to foster healthy living. Human and social supports include housing, education and schools, healthcare and services, food sources, etc. Access to these

human supports, especially when they are of high quality, allow for individuals to have, at the very least, the basics of a quality life.

Homelessness (Children's Defense Fund, 2014) and high residential mobility (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000) are more common for impoverished people of color. High levels of residential mobility at a young age, is negatively associated with the well-being of adults (Oishi, 2010). Additionally, Buckner, Bassuk, and Weinred (2010) found that school truancy was a link between homelessness and poor academic achievement. Even when students are not homeless, but have high levels of residential mobility, they are still limited in their academic achievement (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000) due to inconsistencies in instruction. Additionally, a lack of a secure home base can also impact students' ability to engage positive relationships in school settings by thwarting social skills and the ability to develop interpersonal relationships and connections (Oishi, 2010). Not only does housing effect they way students interact with others, but also, Pinderhughes, Nix, Foster, and Jones (2001) found that neighborhood context influences the way parents interact with their children. In their 2001 longitudinal study on the way parental behaviors were impacted by the combined effects of neighborhood context (race, urban versus rural locality, residential stability, available public services, and social networks), Pinderhughes and colleagues found that negative neighborhood characteristics, coupled with poverty, led to negative parenting practices, such as, harsher punishments and a lack of warmth toward children.

Further, living in poverty can negatively effect the quality of schools that students attend. Because public schools are primarily funded through the ad-valorem property tax system, schools located in more affluent areas are favored, leaving impoverished families to attend schools in areas with relatively lower tax bases, thus lower expenditures to fund education (*San*

*Antonio v. Rodriguez*, 1973; Hawkins Ash and Anderson, 2013). Additionally, Peske and Haycock (2006) and Darling-Hammond (2010) report that students who live and attend schools in areas with the most need, are often subject to having less highly qualified teachers in their schools than more affluent schools (where students typically have greater access to social supports).

Aside from a safe and secure place to live and availability of quality schools within home neighborhoods, access to healthy food is a necessary element of healthy development and academic achievement (Basch, 2010). Unfortunately, food deserts (Powell et al, 2007; Lee, 2012; Bower, Thorpe, Rhode, Gaskin, 2014) are common, and healthy and affordable food options are limited (Yousefian et al., 2011) in impoverished communities. Unfulfilled nutritional needs impair students' alertness and limit their school attendance and participation, which leads to an affect on their ability to engage in class (National Research Council Institute of Medicine, 2004).

**Physical and Mental Healthiness.** Untreated health factors place a substantial toll on low-income individuals and families. Regrettably, disparities in health knowledge and the healthcare system have created increased cases of unaddressed health issues in both low-income and underserved communities. In addition to these communities being disadvantaged by the healthcare system, Nelson, Smedly, and Smith (2002) found and argue that there are racial and ethnic disparities in the healthcare system that leave minorities unduly suffering from unaddressed health needs and poor treatment. In his study on out of school factors that influence school achievement, Berliner (2009) found low-income children had high reports of low birth weight as an effect of limited prenatal care, or inadequate access to health care and services, food insecurity, polluted environments, family relations, and neighborhood characteristics. These

characteristics were identified as large distractors from school success. Children born beneath the healthy weight criteria are often subject to health ailments that slow down their physical and cognitive development. Berliner (2009) notes that these factors are “concentrated in schools that serve poor and minority children and families” (p. 8) and have a strong impact on the health and well being of student populations. While unaddressed prenatal and early childhood health needs impact students in lower age groups, among older students, pregnancy and alcoholism are common factors that impede academic development (National Research Council Institute of Medicine (2003). Good health is necessary for students of all ages and grade levels to be able to fully and positively engage in school.

In addition to physical health ramifications, mental health issues interfere with student learning. Life stresses, depression, and anxiety are often found to limit students’ academic trajectories. According to Adelman and Taylor (2000) mental health issues that are not properly addressed interfere with teachers’ ability to effectively reach students. The negative health issues that plague children are perpetuated by the lack of many of the basic human and social needs being met. Additionally, Shochet and Chiang (2010) report that the way students perceive social treatment and connectedness in schools can also lead to negative mental health effects. Furthermore, Basch (2010) suggests that health-related problems may have a limiting effect on student’s ability to perform well, particularly among minority students. He suggests that providing proper interventions can in fact improve the educational outcomes of students. If left unaddressed, these factors have the potential to derail the success of students.

**Social and environmental characteristics.** Finally, social and environmental factors, such as the need for more informal and formal support systems (Anderson-Butcher, Stetler, & Midle, 2006), the lack of opportunities to develop social capital (Bourdieu, 1977; Delpit, 2006),

and the negative influence of violence within the community (Bowen and Bowen, 1999) have potential to negatively impact one's success in school. Even in students who have high quality teachers, possess intrinsic motivation, and attend an identified "quality school", the aforementioned realities can still impede learning and achievement. Unaddressed, negative ecological and social factors, influence personal, social, and student development by reducing motivation, increasing misplaced aggression, increasing truancy and dropout rates, and minimizing overall school engagement (Yaffe, 2010; National Research Council Institute of Medicine, 2004).

Most scholarship that deals with public schooling and how to increase its effectiveness heavily focuses on what takes place inside school settings, but fail to recognize that before students even arrive at school, they bring with them a host of realities that shape the social and ecological contexts of their lives. Although teacher quality and school culture and climate are important factors that shape students' schooling experiences, the impacts of these factors are not isolated. What takes place within the immediate school context can only be fully understood when larger social issues are considered (Coleman, et al, 1966). Unfortunately, the fact that the abovementioned realities of unaddressed social and ecological factors are significantly present in both low-income communities and communities of color is largely due to the fact that modern day social outcomes are underpinned by historical traits of racism and classism.

### **Public School Rhetoric**

Even in a system of de jure desegregated "public" education, quality education continues to be separate and *unequal* (Kozol, 2005; Diamond, 2006; Dixson, 2011). Although schools are public by definition, the privatization (by power, opinion, and influence) of the public school system excludes the very groups of people and citizens (common people) that it is intended to serve (Higgins & Abowitz, 2011). Berliner (2009) noted that according to data gathered by the



Programme on International Student Assessment (PISA) and National Assessment of Education Programs, schools work less well for poor students and more well for their affluent counterparts.

Traditional school reforms that are targeted at closing the achievement gap are primarily focused on what takes place in school. These reforms that push for “systematic change” in their rhetoric are often hasty to change the school system, but do not simultaneously seek to change the other societal systems (i.e., job force, healthcare, housing, etc.) that indirectly impede student learning and school engagement, further exacerbating the achievement gap. As the literature reviewed above suggests, educational performance and achievement are highly influenced by social and environmental factors. However, many national education reforms do not seek to explore or address these issues as they relate to academic performance. Authorities over education continue to expect higher performance from, principals, teachers, students, and parents but do not equip them with all of the tools necessary to meet the demand.

### **Education Reforms Have Failed to Address Social and Ecological Issues**

**The Aftermath of *Brown*.** Since the ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education, 1954*, education reforms in the United States have been created with the intention of closing the achievement and opportunities gaps that exist between different races and classes. Unfortunately however, now more than 60 years post the mandate to outlaw racially segregated schools as a way to ensure access to quality school experiences, schools are becoming increasingly resegregated (Donner & Dixon, 2013). Traditional education reform is failing to produce the outcomes that it intends, due in large part to its failure to address the residual effects of racism and the root causes of poverty that influence education.

Although *Brown* made progress in establishing equitable education between black and white students, simply changing the law did not kill the spirit of segregation. *Brown* eradicated de jure school segregation, and challenged segregation in other social arenas, but the spirit of separatism did not disappear so quickly. Derrick Bell (2004) refers to the outcome of *Brown* as symbolic rather than realistic relief for segregated schools. The *Brown* decision did not account for the socially stratified contexts in which schools and communities were situated. Seminal research by Moynihan (1965) exposed that even a decade after the start of racial desegregation, social and economic policies and norms continued to keep Blacks in inferior social positions. Oliver and Shapiro (2006) discuss how wealth inequalities regulated by access to the workforce and ability to accumulate property worked at keeping Blacks from reaching the same levels of attainment as white. Additionally Massey (2007) discussed the way social resources such as housing and the justice system continue to be regulated to maintain the black-white social (dis)order. Thus school reforms such as inter-district transfers and bussing, that were direct responses to the goals of *Brown*, still do not make their intended impact (Freund, 2007).

**Post Brown.** Following the *Brown* decision, researchers and education reformers began acknowledging that the issues of differential education achievement extended beyond racial difference in schools. In 1966, James Coleman, and a team of researchers, found that deeper things happening within students' school and home context influence their educational experiences. For example, while school desegregation was first narrowly concerned with whether or not black students attended schools with white students or had teachers of different racial background than their own, Coleman et al. (1966) suggested that racial desegregation in schools must be considered on a more complex level. Coleman's study found that beyond whether or not a school had a racially diverse pool of students and teacher, teacher quality

characteristics are just as, if not more important towards the quality of education that a student has to his or her advantage.

Despite the findings of the Coleman Report (1966), addressing the core issues of what causes differential learning outcomes, or rather assessments, between races was limited. The *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) of 1965 was a reform effort birthed out of the national, “War on Poverty” agenda, set by President Lyndon B. Johnson. Under this Act, the government designated federal funds to go to schools that served high populations of students in poverty. However, the Act addressed school funding (which Coleman (1966) found was not the sole dictator of educational outcome differences) more than it did poverty. For example, per the guidelines of ESEA, any funding provided to the school was intended to provide schools that served low-income families monetary support for instructional material, professional development, resources to support educational programs, and promote parental involvement. However, this did not address the issue of poverty that directly effects educational outcomes, such as health ails, exposure to violence and crime, instable family structures, and residential mobility. Simply putting more money in schools does not address the needs that students have before they even arrived at school. For example, having a parent involvement policy in legislation only sets a standard for parent engagement but does make provisions for it. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act was intended to assist students and families in poverty/from low-income backgrounds. Given the class structure that works to dictate the workforce, low-income parents typically work in fields that have the least flexible work-time schedules. A working class parent might very well want to, but not be able to participate in “parent involvement” opportunities. Also, according to Moynihan (1965) during the time of his findings and the enactment of ESEA, low-income black families were more likely to be headed

by one-parent households than any other group; thus, if there is only one parent available, parent involvement in conventional terms becomes more difficult.

The *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* of 1965 has been amended many times over the last four decades yet it remains foundationally focused in increased money for schools. Gary Orfield and Frankenberg's (2014) on the 60 years since the *Brown* decision, he noted that since the 1980s, that education policy has largely been focused on increased accountability and shifted concern from racial realities in schools. With increased school funding comes increased accountability and standards, however despite school reforms purpose to close the achievement gap, school accountability strategies often lead to unintended negative consequences for low-income students (Darling-Hammond, 2004).

No Child Left Behind, 2001 (NCLB), Race To the Top, 2009 (RTTT) and Common Core State Standards initiative (2009) are the most recent<sup>2</sup> decedents of the original premises set forth by the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Each of these federally authorized and funded school reform efforts are different in their own right, yet maintain core premises set in place by ESEA, which are to get federal government more involved in education reform by promoting higher accountability to meeting the needs of students who are not excelling. One of the major elements of NCLB was school choice (U.S. Department of Education). School choice allows parents to choose another, more successful, school if their child's school fails to meet Adequately Yearly Progress standards. While the goal of school choice is to allow students the freedom to move from failing schools, other students are ultimately left behind to survive the subpar education quality at the present school. By simply allowing students to transfer from one school to another does not alleviate the larger issues that the students and underperforming schools are facing. In order to help low-income and/or minority students have access to school

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<sup>2</sup> This literature review was completed prior to the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015)

quality, instead a focus on increasing the quality of the failing schools, NCLB still only provides limited opportunity to school success by allowing students to leave the underperforming school (Kim & Sunderman, 2004). Further, NCLB, RTTT, and Common Core are all still heavily focused on accountability. Peterson and West (2003) critique the practice of school accountability by asserting that these reforms do not address social and ecological issues that students often face, such as mal-nutrition and hunger and unmet civil rights.

### **Education Reforms that Acknowledge Social Inequality**

Many researchers in the fields of psychology, sociology, and education, particularly those whose work targets low-income communities of color, recognize that in order to foster positive educational outcomes for students with the most need, a host of social supports must be in place. Research identifies that the levels in which families and social networks engage children are strong determinants to school success (Lareau, 2003; Gordon, Bridglall, & Meroe; 2004; Comer, 2009). Additionally, health and safety are necessary elements to educational success (Berliner, 2009; Basch, 2010; Children Defense Fund, 2014). The National Research Council Institute of Medicine (2004) asserts that it is difficult for youth and adolescence to fully engage in school when issues such as “joblessness and poverty are endemic, violence and homelessness are common, and access to resources and opportunities are scarce” (p.15). However, while most traditional education reform efforts do not consider the effects of these out-of-school factors, there are a few education reform strategies and models that have worked to mitigate the effects of these limitations.

#### **James Comer’s School Development Model**

James Comer, during the late 1960s, recognized that what takes place in the social realities of individuals, influences how students experience schooling. After deep reflection on

the stark differences between the life outcomes of his childhood friends and schoolmates and his own, James Comer recognized that differences in educational outcomes were not just results of attending different schools, but are very much related to the social contexts within and outside of school walls. According to Comer, education is a larger complex process, and the failure of public schools is a by-product of the failure of larger social systems; “schools are greatly influenced by what is going on in the society, improving them in any significant way inevitably requires improving society” (Comer, 2009, p. 95). To Comer, the larger societal failures could explain the difference between two equally knowledgeable and skilled individuals, becoming a medical and/or research professional or living a life of hardship. As a medical doctor and child psychiatrist, Comer recognized that education improvement required a shift from a sole focus of curriculum instruction and assessment, towards being more inclusive of cultural and societal considerations, through interactive efforts between schools, families, and support staff.

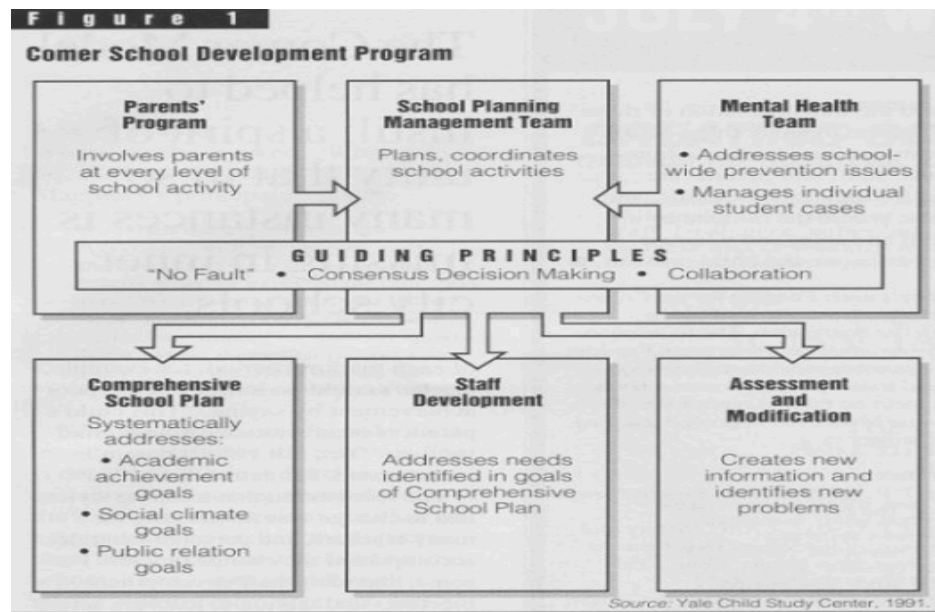
Comer (2009) first attributed differential student success to familial background and upbringing. In his own life and research, Comer recognized that students with more stable, positive, and educationally focused parents tended to have better outcomes than their peers from less stable families. Extending from family, he also recognized that the support systems of students had a tendency to reflect in their outcomes. For example, he found that students who were from “decent” backgrounds and families, yet participated in mischievous actions were often intercepted by teachers and adults-- who had familial types of relationships with them--and reminded of their background and how their misbehavior did not align. On the other hand, students from dissimilar backgrounds were not treated with such leniency often being punished and even judged for their actions. One of Comer’s ideas towards changing this negative and unfair correlation was to restructure school management and leadership to support student

learning through fostering personal development (Joyner, Ben-Avie, & Comer, 2004). Comer created a school management style that shifted from principals having sole authority over their schools in a dictatorial manner, to a school that functioned by administrator/teacher collaboration, parent involvement, and one that fostered children's emotional needs.

Established in 1968, as part of Yale's Child Study Center, James Comer and his colleagues created the School Development Program. The School Development Program piloted in two New Haven, Connecticut elementary schools. This model worked with school staff, parents and students "to create a model that turned dysfunctional, low-achieving schools into well-functioning, high-achieving schools" with the hope of being able to disseminate this model widely (Comer, 2009, p.95).

The Comer Process provides the organizational, management and communication framework for planning and managing all the activities of the school based on the developmental needs of its students. When fully implemented, the process brings a positive school and classroom climate, stability, and an instructional focus that supports all of the school's curriculum and renewal efforts. (Comer School Development Program, 2014, n.p.) See Figure 2.1 below.

**Figure 2.1**



As illustrated in Figure 2.1 above, Comer's School Development program incorporates active parents and a team of mental health professionals in the planning and coordination of school activities. This is a school management approach that is often not used in traditional school settings. Traditionally, parents, mental health professionals, and school administrators all have agendas, that may be similarly situated, but often involve limited collaboration. Having these groups working together to inform what happens in a school makes provisions for student needs to be considered in school programming because individuals who are more closely keen to the intimate needs of students are providing input. When this collaborative management style is absent, there is typically top-down programming and curriculum design that is often disconnected from the immediate and contextual needs of the students they are set to serve.

Secondly, this diagram highlights the Comer school model's three overarching guiding principles: (1) "no fault", (2) conscience decision-making, and (3) collaboration. These principles are often not used in traditional public schools. Examining these principles further



sheds light to how Comer's school model, unlike traditional efforts for educational improvement seek to consider the social, cultural, and ecological complexities that make up the context of students' experiences.

The principle of "no fault" describes a disciplinary method that approaches discipline situations from a problem-solving perspective rather than in a way that places blame. "No fault does not mean no-accountability: it means everyone becomes accountable" (Joyner, Ben-Avie, & Comer, 2004, p. 18). According to Hart and Hodson (2008), no-fault is not only a disciplinary method, but it is an incorporated part of the curriculum that instills in students to self-respect, respect for others, effective communication, it allows the disciplinary figure to fully explore and assess a situation prior to assessing blame. Hart and Hodson (2008) define conflict as complex issue with deeper roots—this means that when conflict arises amongst students, it is often a reaction to an issue that is not the one that was appeared to have caused the initial conflict. Using the no-fault disciplinary method allows school leaders opportunities to understand their students in a more intimate way, and contextualize the in-school disturbances that they may be apart of.

Unlike the rigid and militarized discipline polices like "no-excuse" or "zero-tolerance" that are used in many school systems such as KIPP and charter schools (Lack, 2009), less rigid and militarized "no-fault" discipline policies seek to create a caring and trusting environment (Haynes, 1996). In an interview posted on an education blog that critiques the burgeoning corporate education reform agenda, Joan Goodman (2014), professor and director of Teach for America at University of Pennsylvania describes the no-excuse disciplinary policy as one that values submission, obedience and self-control. Unlike the "no-fault" policy that is used in the Comer school model, the no excuses policy assumes that any leniency will lead to negative behavior, and each negative action will lead to another—such as the "domino effect" (Goodman,

2014). This projection of negative inclinations on students sets in place deficit mindset of the student, perhaps making her/him believe that they are not capable of positive behavior except by demand. This diminishes student's sense of self-control and self-sufficiency.

Further, Comer's model did incorporate parents/family in the school management team, but his model failed to recognize the bigger picture of family. Including parents in the school management model allowed parents to bring in the perspective of students from a familial aspect, and aided in family involvement. However, this inclusion did not explore the larger impacts of parents on student success. The parents that were able to take part in the school management team had a different set of circumstantial privilege that not all parents can afford. These parents had flexibility in their schedules that allowed them to attend the School Plan Management Team meetings. However, the parents who did not have such flexibility could not participate in school in these ways. In his reflections back on his own schooling, Comer (2009) made differential notation of students who had positive parental role models in their lives versus those who did not. Although this model incorporated parents, it did not address the harm that having unavailable parents (another ecological reality that plagues many students and potentially hinders learning and development) had on students and their adjustments and progress in schools.

While revolutionary during its time, and considerate of many elements of learning and development that most other school reforms have historically overlooked, Comer's School Development model did not account for helping families supplement the resources that they lacked in order to better provide for/prepare their students for school success. Although his model urged different groups to work together in school management with the intent of making school leadership more transparent and collaborative, the collaboration happened more on an in-school basis—with the exception of the direct partnership between the pilot schools and the Yale

Child Development center. Comer recognized that community context of students served as a probable indicator of life outcomes and success in school, however his model scarcely incorporated community as a contributing part of the solution.

### **The Important Role of Community and Family Partnerships in Education**

According to Joyce Epstein (2011), education researchers and practitioners typically ascribe to three perspectives regarding the relationships between family and school in regards to student development: (1) there is a separate and distinct relationship of families and schools; (2) there is a shared responsibility of families and school; and (3) there is a sequential responsibility of families and schools (p. 29). Epstein's work focuses on the second theory, that there is a shared responsibility of families and schools that also directly incorporates the community. She argues:

If educators view students as *children*<sup>3</sup>, they are likely to see both the family and the community as partners within the school in children's education and development. Partners recognize their shared interests in and responsibilities for children, and they work together to create better programs and opportunities for students. (Epstein, 2011, p. 389)

Epstein's philosophy is that partnerships between schools, families, and communities foster a shared responsibility in the learning and development process of students. In traditional organizational structures of school, the roles of schools, families and communities, are often

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<sup>3</sup> It is important to understand the distinction in the use of the labels "children" and "students". The term children/child recognizes that the identity of students in school is comprised of more than their personhood while in the school setting. As research shows, students' identity at school is a reflection of the experiences, relationships, and interactions that occur outside of school walls (Bronfenbrenner 1972, 1994; Boocock, 1982; Nodding, 1984; Epstein, 2008, 2011; The National Research Council Institute of Medicine, 2004; Edmond Gordon, 2005). Thus, the labeling as student as only a student mitigates the degree to which a child's experiences influences their roles and experiences as "students" is a reflection of the experiences, relationships, and interactions that occur outside of school walls (Bronfenbrenner 1972, 1994; Boocock, 1982; Nodding, 1984; Epstein, 2008, 2011; The National Research Council, 2004; Gordon, 2005). Thus, the labeling as student as only a student mitigates the degree to which a child's experiences influence their roles and experiences as "students".

independent. This independent functioning often leads to break downs in communication, and causes tensions in the roles different stakeholders play towards educating children. While each stakeholder seeks to educate children, attempting to accomplish this through disconnected agendas limits its productivity. Some researchers believe that the only way to fully engage students in schools, in a meaningful way, is to incorporate schools, family, and community along with the federal government and public and private sector organizations in the learning process. Patricia Graham (1995) describes the importance of this collaboration:

The battleship, the school, cannot do this alone. The rest of the education—al flotilla must assist: families, communities, government, higher education, and the business community. Only then will all of our children be able to achieve that which by birthright should be theirs: enthusiasm for and accomplishment in learning. (p. 22)

The body of literature reviewed above discusses how collaborative partnerships between schools, families, and communities can aid schools in being agents of both academic achievement and community development (Epstein & Conners, 1992; Boullion & Gomez, 2001; Dryfoos, 2002; Epstein, 2011; Dobbie & Fryer, 2011, HCZ Project, 2012). However, it is important to know that the established partnerships, as described above, cannot simply be partnership in theory, but must consist of an intimacy that creates a synergetic sense of concern and stake between all partners—the school, family, and community.

The proper education of any people includes sympathetic touch between teacher and pupil; knowledge on the part of the teacher, not simply of the individual taught, but of his surroundings and background, and the history of his class and group; such contact between pupils, and between teacher and pupil, on the basis of perfect social equality, as

will increase this sympathy and knowledge; facilities for education in equipment and housing, and the promotion of such extracurricular activities as will tend to induct the child into life. (W.E.B. DuBois, 1935, p. 328)

DuBois (1935) highlights the importance of an intimate interpersonal relationship between students and teachers. Further, he asserts that in order for true learning to take place, the teacher has to be aware of the social and living conditions of all students, as well as be able to maintain facilities where students can expand their knowledge to reach optimal development. DuBois (1936) and Comer (1996, 1997, 2009, 2014) recognize the link between what takes place in the school setting, and what takes place out of school. Further, scholars such as DuBois, Comer, Epstein, and Gordon, recognize the importance of social supports, supplemental resources, and positive social networks in full peak student development.

### **The Full Service Community School Model**

Although not created with a particular designation to any racial group, the full-service community school model was established to mitigate the ecological hardships and barriers created by income, wealth, and resource gaps in communities. The full-service community-school is a type of school that provides its students and the surrounding community with wraparound services to support student and human social development. It is one that extends beyond traditional school hours, often operating seven days a week, and provides an education curriculum and social services that are focused on community engagement and learning (Dryfoos, 2002; Yaffe, 2010). This school model provides families with the tools necessary to nurture the development of their children. (Dryfoos, 2002; Yaffe, 2010).

The full-service community school model has a history that dates back to the early 1900's with the Gary, Indiana Platoon School Model. This model incorporated recreational activities,

vocational learning, and fieldtrips into the community, into the curriculum of schools that served working class students. Further this model was designed with a goal of efficiency that made sure that every part of the school was being used at every part of the day (Mohl, 1977). The FSCS has been utilized as an effort, on the part of schools, to provide students and families access to the academic, extracurricular, health and social services, and positive learning and living environments that have proven to be vital to student success. Full-service community schools are designed not only to mitigate the barriers of positive educational outcomes, but also to improve the family functioning and involvement and to enhance the social climate of the school and its community (Dryfoos, 2000). While these schools are designed first as schools to meet the mandates of education requirements, they are also and equally designed to serve as agents of social change.

The purpose of the full-service community school is twofold. First, a community school works to provide its attending students and their families access to the resources necessary for full school engagement and to help students excel academically (Coalition for Community Schools, 2014). In many cases, these resources include access to healthcare, a learning environment that tends to students' holistic needs, supplementary learning resources and opportunities, and a team of individuals who recognize students' learning and success as being more broadly encompassing than scholastic engagement. Secondly, the FSCS serves as a hub of resources available to the larger community that will aid in making the community a stable, supportive, and safe place to live (Coalition for Community Schools, 2014). According to Dryfoos and Maguire (2002) some of the components of the FSCS might include: on-site physical and mental health services, case management, youth development programs, academic and non-academic student support services, parent and family resource centers, etc. Each school

that utilizes the community school model looks different because each community school is designed in order to address the unique contextual needs of the students, families, and communities that it serves.

Supporters of the full-service community school model are not concerned with just students as individuals, but seek to gain a broader understanding of people and their communities in order to implement policies and practices that reach the core causes of educational success and failure. While some educators and theorist see school success and failure exclusively as a result of the individual person and free will, the theoretical approach behind the community school model recognizes school success and failure as at least partially, if not wholly, a reflection of an individual's broader set of life circumstances.

**The Harlem Children's Zone.** One of the, if not the most, well-known community-school reform effort that utilizes the mission of the full-service model is the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) Project. This community service reform project spans across and serves nearly 100-blocks of Central Harlem and seeks to provide students and their families with holistic means of rebuilding a community. The catalyst of rebuilding this Harlem, New York community that the HCZ Project uses is providing students and their families with educational and social services that are necessary in order to overcome the long standing social barriers that many residents of Harlem face. "The two fundamental principles of The Zone Project are to help kids in a sustained way, starting as early in their lives as possible, and to create a critical mass of adults around them who understand what it takes to help children succeed" (The HCZ Project, 2013). The HCZ Project provides a pipeline through a series of best practice programs for children of ages 0-3, their parents, and community members. The services offered include workshops, access to social

services, health and community-building programs, before and after school programs, as well as a full service community school.

The Harlem Children's Zone Project is based on the premise that if all aspects of society—in this case, the targeted Harlem community-- function together to reach the same goal, then the residents of this community will prosper. The founder of the HCZ Project, Geoffrey Canada recognized that families in Harlem were suffering from impoverishment, a kind of impoverishment that begins at birth, and continues throughout the course of life as a result of minimal access to proper pre- and post-natal healthcare services, a lack of early childhood development, social services being limited in poor communities, and a lack of encouragement and belief that school children from Harlem have the ability to enter college (The HCZ Project, 2013; Tough, 2008).

Dobbie & Fryer (2011) conducted what they proclaimed as the first empirical causal study on the charter schools within the Harlem Children's Zone and the impact on educational achievement. The overarching question of this study is “are quality schools enough to increase achievement among the poor”. (Dobbie & Fryer, 2011, p. 158). Using school administrative data from charter schools that are located within the HCZ and information from the HCZ, Dobbie and Fryer (2011) found that factors correlated with enrollment of schools within HCZ led to positive educational gains in students. Their data suggests that “attending an HCZ middle school had the potential to close the black-white achievement gap in mathematics (Dobbie & Fryer, 2011, p. 158). Additionally, they found that “the effects in elementary school are large enough to close the racial achievement gap in both mathematics and ELA” (Dobbie & Fryer, 2011, p. 158). While this study's findings show a positive correlation between school achievement and attending a school that provides social supports to their students and their families, the Harlem



Children's Zone's success rates have received heavy scrutiny (Otterman, 2010). Many have criticized the practices of the Harlem Children's Zone, arguing that their policies work to weed out students and inflate performance assessments. The Harlem Children's Zone is a unique example of the community school model because of its scale, large funding source, and high-profile nature. Contrarily, most full-service community schools have expanded from within traditional school settings through partnerships with community organizations and agencies, as well as local resource providers, being funded through state funding, grants, and philanthropic donations.

### **Empirical Studies on the Full-Service Community School Model**

Research has found that schools that utilize the full-service community school model have made positive impacts in both educational and non-educational areas of students' development. In an evaluation of 49 community school programs, Dryfoos (2000) found (up through the time of the evaluation) that although community school initiatives had varying degrees of development, they were showing positive outcomes. Her findings noted that overall, schools that utilized the full-service community school model had shown improvements in social behavior, student health development, family interaction and parental engagement, and better school climates (Dryfoos, 2000).

In a study of a full-service elementary school in the San Francisco Bay Area, Abrams and Gibbs (2000) explored the barriers and opportunities that were involved in building school and community collaboration in a diverse urban elementary school. The school's goal was to create a learning environment where students could excel academically by creating a full-service environment. However, through observations and interviews with school staff and community members, they found that school faculty and staff were doubtful in their ability to counter

negative impacts of home and social conditions on student learning. Additionally in their study they found that relational barriers between the school, the families the school served, and community members limited effective collaboration. A notable finding from this study is that the school's principal "felt that key school activists were unwilling to give up any power or control over the plans for the new school and that their primary intention was to undermine her authority" (Abrams & Gibbs, 2000, p. 90). This finding is unique in the fact that it reveals that in order to productively execute the full-service community school model, all stakeholders must be aligned in a single vision that is centered on school improvement and not individual or a single group's power. Additionally, while this study included the perspectives of staff, parent, and community voices, it did not include the students as research participants.

In a mixed-method dissertation study on the "Impact of Full Service Community School Programs on Student Success", Momeni (2015) found that while there was evidence of student success as a result of the full service community school model, the perceived impact of the model varied based on year of implementation of the program, student grade level, and participant type (i.e., teacher, administrator, counselor, etc.). For example, a majority of the administrators and teachers surveyed in this study found that the FSCS model had positive impact on their district closing the achievement gap. The researcher also found that measured by student GPAs the impacts of the model were greater between sophomore and junior year, than freshman year. The researcher did not find that a significant difference in student success existed among students who identified as Hispanic verses those who did not (Momeni, 2015). While this study used the qualitative method of open-ended survey questions to gain perceptions of the impact of the full service community school model, the researcher did not have direct interaction with the participants. A lack of direct interaction with participants may have limited the

researcher's full understanding of how the full service community school model impacted student learning growth, as well as their ability to understand the context around participants' perceptions.

### **Gaps in Literature**

There is a considerable body of conceptual literature on the full-service community school model, however, there are limited empirical studies. Further more, the empirical studies on this model are used to assess whether or not the full-service community school model meets its intended goals of improving student outcomes by providing resources to mitigate the ecological factors that impinge on student learning, these studies mostly, if not all, use quantitative measures. While quantitative data is indeed valuable, a qualitative perspective on the impacts, influences, and efficiency of such a school model would be beneficial. Unfortunately, there is very limited qualitative research that explores and assesses beneficiaries' perspectives on the influence and expected benefits of the resources and experiences provided by full-service community schools. This dissertation study seeks to contribute to the limited body of qualitative data on the full-service community school model, and well as seeks to serve as an arena for the voices to those directly impacted by the organization and utilization of the a full-service community school model within an otherwise traditional public school setting. Finally, this dissertation serves as a example that qualitative research is a necessary element in effectively implementing school policy.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical frameworks used to explore this study utilize the scholarship of Urie Bronfenbrenner and Sarane Boocock. These frameworks were used to draw a connection between the ways in which social and ecological factors influence what takes place in school settings, and students' experiences in school, in order to better understand how the FSCS model

works at Legacy High School. Additionally, Tara Yosso's theory on Community Cultural Wealth was used as a way to maintain the integrity of the research site and its participants in a non-deficit projecting perspective. Using this framework I ground my researcher perspective in a way that finds value in the culture and community of my research site and participants. Further, I find the knowledge given to me through this study valuable in its own right.

Urie Bronfenbrenner and Sarane Boocock gained recognition by scholars who were curious to understand how child and human development influenced the way children experienced life and school experiences. Sarane Boocock's (1980) "The Learning Systems" theory, and Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1972) "Ecological Systems Theory" depict models of human development, teaching, and learning through which they describe how students' engagement in school (and likelihood to succeed) is influenced by contextualized experiences that students have in their homes, communities, social networks, and other out-of-school circumstances. While education reform effort focus on "fixing" the problems of school achievement within the school setting, Bronfenbrenner and Boocock assert that in order to fully address the issues of school outputs, the in-puts must first be considered and understood. Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and Sarane Boocock's "the Learning Systems" will be used as 2 of 3 theoretical frameworks for this study.

### **Ecological Systems Theory**

Developmental psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner (1994) asserts "in order to understand human development, one must understand the entire ecological system in which growth occurs" (p. 1643). Bronfenbrenner's theory recognizes that life outcomes of an individual are largely influenced by the social and structural environments in which they live and experience life, "such as school and family...[and] patterns of culture, such as the economy, customs, and body

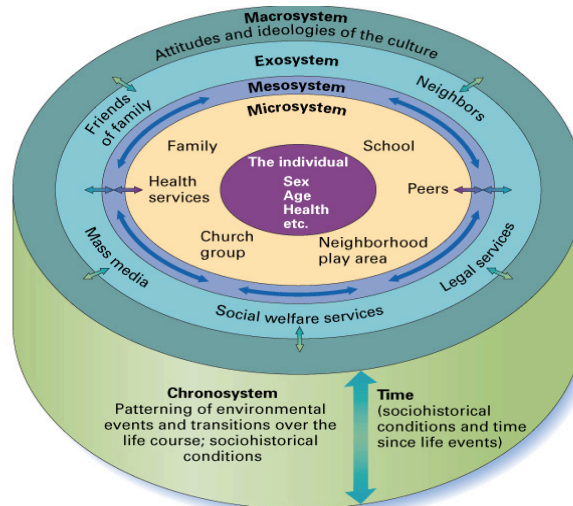
of knowledge” (p.1643). Throughout his studies, Bronfenbrenner attributed issues such as poverty, social networks, interactions with peers and adults, and cultural practices as shaping children’s development as they matriculate through school. In the 1970s, through his work with his colleagues, Bronfenbrenner added to the body of human development literature and research that considers children and adults in their real-life settings and the implications of such on development.

Urie Bronfenbrenner’s research combined the disciplines of psychology, sociology, anthropology, and economics to explain the human development and personal growth processes. Bronfenbrenner suggested that in order to fully understand why individuals develop in the ways that they do, the entire environment, within which people grow and experience life, must be considered. Recognizing that individuals play a role in his or her own personal development, the individual is at the center of this model and is ultimately influenced by the many factors outside of self that make up the context within which growth occurs (Bronfenbrenner, 1972). He explains these outside factors as elements within the ecosystem of human development, which consists of five subsystems: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1972). According to Bronfenbrenner these subsystems (which have been likened to Russian Nesting Dolls) represent the different aspects of the ecological environment that are “nested structures” that shape the human development process—with each subsystem having bi-directional influence on one another (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). This suggests that any change or shift in one subsystem can have an effect on another subsystem. Figure 2.2<sup>4</sup> below illustrates Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Model.

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<sup>4</sup> This image is property of the McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. Permission for use in published documents and dissertation is in progress.

**Figure 2.2**



**The microsystem.** Bronfenbrenner describes and defines the first subsystem of the ecological environment as the Microsystem. The microsystem is at the core of human development and is inclusive of the:

pattern[s] of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical, social, and symbolic features that invite, permit, or inhibit engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interaction with, and activity, in the immediate environment. (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 39)

Individuals interact within many microsystems. These subsystems include family and home settings, school settings (including day care and early childhood), peer groups, the work place, etc. (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). This subsystem is also inclusive of the neighborhood and the resources that may or may not be provided within, such as doctors' offices, libraries, parks, etc. (Victor Valley College, n.d.). It is at this level of interaction—in a person's immediate environment—that serves as the initial point of contact with making meaning of the outside world. It is interactions with family, peers, teachers, authority figures and disciplinarians, and

within some of the aforementioned places that individuals develop social and cognitive skills that influence how they develop, behave, and interact with the world around them.

**The mesosystem.** The mesosystem “comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings (microsystems) containing the developing person” (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 40). For example, this level of the ecological subsystem makes meaning of how the home/family environment from which a child comes influences how that child interacts, engages, and/or behaves in school (i.e., a child comes from a home where breakfast is not or cannot be provided may display disengagement or irritable behavior while at school). This subsystem is valuable in understanding how people adapt to the various experiences, expectations, and demands they face in life, and more specifically between their various microsystems.

In this dissertation study, what Bronfenbrenner describes as the micro-and mesosystems, and how these two systems interact within the lives of participants, were explored through one-on-one interviews with students, parents, and teachers. The interview questions for this study were designed in such a way that engaged students and parents to talk about their home lives, what they do when they are not in school, the communities within which they live, who students spend time with both in and out of school, etc. Exploring these areas of the lives of student and parent participants helped make meaning of the interpersonal relationships they have and how those relationships might influence their experiences within the research site. Further, these systems and their intersectionality were explored through observations. Observing participants, allowed me to make connections between participants’ core values and identities and how they interact in their school setting.

**The exosystem.** The exosystem is made up of “the linkages and process taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not contain the developing person, but in which events occur that indirectly influence processes within the immediate setting in which the developing person lives” (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 40). This subsystem at work can be illustrated through understanding how neighborhood crime might effect a student’s experience at school or how issues at a parent’s workplace (i.e., promotion or lay-off, pay increase or pay cut) might influence the way the parent interacts with a child at home, as examples. Even though a child is not directly involved with the outside occurrences (such as the neighborhood crime or the parent’s work place, as described above, these elements have a great influence on the child’s development. While the microsystem and mesosystem both directly involve the individual in the developing process, the circumstances that occur in the exosystem indirectly influences child and human development.

For this study, the exosystem of participants and how it influences their engagement within the research site was explored through one-on-one interviews. Based on the amount of detail the participant provided, I was able to gain an understanding of how participants’ exosystem influenced their lives and ultimately their experiences at Legacy. Given the sensitive nature of what the exosystem represents (potential disruption in the living environment), this system had the potential to be difficult to fully explore based on participants’ level of comfort. Further, because of the complicated connection between what takes place in the exosystem and how it impacts a person’s life, participants might not have even been fully aware of their own affect by what takes place in their personal exosystems.

**The macrosystem.** The forth level of Urie Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory is the macrosystem. “The macrosystem consists of the overarching pattern of micro-, meso-, and



exosystems characteristics of a given culture or sub culture, with particular reference to the belief systems, bodies of knowledge, material resources, customs, life-styles, opportunity structures, hazards, and life course options that are embedded in each of these broader systems” (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 40). More simply stated, it is the “cultural environment in which the child resides” (Williams, 2014, n.p.) The way that humans, particularly children, develop is largely influenced by the social conditions that work together to shape their individualized lives. Elements of the macrosystem include institutional patterns in culture and sub-cultures, such as political economy, the education system, the legal system, etc. (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). This subsystem explains how the different set of circumstances (i.e. family’s socioeconomic status, governmental and legal regulations, religious background, parents’ ideologies based on their lived experiences, etc.) influences the values, decisions, and experiences of a child’s life as he/she grows. Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre (2000) would describe this level of the ecological system as the social discourse that shapes the way people make meaning of their experiences and execute those meanings throughout their daily lives. According to Bronfenbrenner (1974), “macrosystems are conceived and examined not only in structural terms, but as carriers of information and ideology, that both explicitly and implicitly endow meaning and motivation to particular agencies, social networks, roles, activities, and their interrelations” (p. 515).

The macrosystem of the research population of this dissertation study was studied through observations and document analysis. In order to gain an understanding of the research population and participants’ macrosystem, particular attention was given to written rules and policies of the school, classrooms, and within the community. Additionally, understanding the macrosystem of this study required paying attention to what Anyon (1980) refers to as the

“hidden curriculum”—the undocumented, yet understood rules, norms, and expectations within the research site and setting.

On a broader scale, the macrosystem of the research setting was explored through participant and non-participant observations, outside of the school site and within the larger community setting. Studying the macrosystem on this scale helped me understand the influence of local and district governance, or community imposed regulations, regarding what takes place within the school site. Studying the culture and ideologies of the research setting allowed me to make meanings about how the community school under study, and the things that happen within it, reflects the larger social contexts that make up the reality of school and community members that represent the research population.

**The chronosystem.** Not originally a subsystem in Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory, the chronosystem was later added as a way to represent and understand “the change or consistency over time not only in the characteristics of the person but also of the environment in which that person lives” (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p.40). Bronfenbrenner found that the study of the passage of time, in relation to a person’s growth and development could not be considered simultaneously, but needed to consider the shifts of environment within which they lived. This subsystem considers things such as changes over the life course in family structure, fluctuations in socioeconomic status, change in residency, major social and historical events, etc. (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). For example, the development of individuals who were of school age during the mid 1950’s was potentially impacted by the change in school segregation laws. Additionally, understanding this system allowed me to make meaning of how a person’s development may or may not have been influenced by larger social developments, shifts, or

traumas such as the nationally recognized deaths of Blacks, youth, and males that participants might have potentially identified with.

Studying the chronosystem of the research setting and participants of the proposed study was most difficult ecological level to study. Because this study is not longitudinal, gaining an understanding of how the passage of time directly impacts the participants within the research setting was impossible. However, secondhand insights into the research setting's chronosystem were gathered through targeting participants who have resided in the research setting for a significant amount of time and/or are familiar with the historical context of the setting.

Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory serves as a theoretical lens through which the ways people develop interpersonal relationship skills, belief patterns, views of self-efficacy, behavioral patterns, etc. can be understood. His theory recognizes that the life trajectories that people take are not isolated and individualized circumstances, but are the sum of the experiences that people have as they grow and develop within their environmental contexts. Like Bronfenbrenner, education sociologist Sarane Boocock recognizes that individuals' development processes are outcomes of the totality of their life experiences and circumstances. Therefore, in order for educators to more fully and accurately address the needs of students in school settings the larger out of classroom contexts and out of school contexts of their lives must also be considered.

### **The Learning Systems Model**

Many traditional educators and education policies limit the scope of understanding and evaluation of students to their performance on standards based assessments. However, scholars like Sarane Boocock seek to inform the ways that student learning is representative of more than the school/classroom instruction and learning outcomes. Her work recognizes that the

environment in which students learn and attain academic success is inclusive of social characteristics within and outside of the school, and the interactions and relationships that students have with various individuals and groups (Boocock, 1972). Ultimately, Boocock's work seeks to explain "what—and under what conditions—social factors have an impact on school performance" (Boocock, 1972, p. 4). She recognizes that a full understanding of a student's academic success and progress cannot be understood without knowing the context within which a student develops and learns (Boocock, 1972; Boocock & Scott, 2005). Students' intellectual achievement is oft understood through the relationship between cognitive and social development (Boocock, 1972).

There are many variables that impinge upon student learning. Life circumstances such as socioeconomic status, racial identity and social race relations, parental/family involvement, political economy, health disparities, community violence, access to resources, etc. all directly or indirectly relate to how students succeed in school—whether it is on the academic level or in relation to compliance of social norms and expectations. Boocock's "The Learning System" model (See Figure 2.3 below) seeks to illustrate how viewing these factors, as elements of students' identity, will assist educators and researchers in fully understanding the development and outcomes of success for students. Boocock's Learning System places an individual child's role as student as a small, yet central element within the learning environment.

**Figure 2.3**

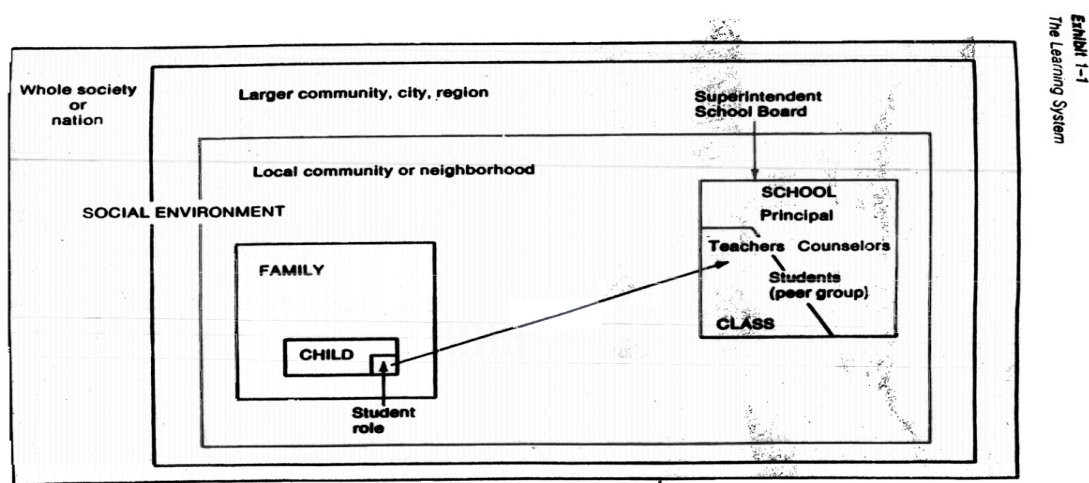


Figure 2.3 illustrates how the role of “the student” in a school system is impacted by how s/he is situated within their family structure, and is a part of a family structure that is under the influence of the local community, larger social environment, and ultimately the political ideologies and policies of the larger nation.

Urie Bronfenbrenner and Sarane Boocock recognize the developmental processes of individuals as an accumulation of lived experiences and circumstances. However, where these two scholars have variation in their conceptual frameworks is in regard to role of projected perception on the individual/student. While Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory focuses on the way that individuals develop and make meaning of the world, Boocock’s scholarship recognizes the ways in which the learning environments, and the people in them, perceive children (based on various factors) and how those projected perceptions influence success. These two frameworks that describe models and theories of human and student development served as two of the theoretical frameworks that informed this study.

The theoretical frameworks of Bronfenbrenner and Boocock challenge educators to see their pupils not simply as students, but as children with very real and complex life contexts that

influence their engagement in school. However, once a child's entire existence is vulnerably placed at the hands of the person entrusted with the responsibility of teaching and assessing their academic and social ability, room is made for misunderstood and misdirected judgment. Unfortunately, students of color, and those who do not meet the mainstream standards of social and economic affluence, are often subject to being approached by educators with a cultural deficit mindset and set of expectations<sup>5</sup>. So while Bronfenbrenner and Boocock urge educators to take the a holistic view of their students, these theories do not equip teachers with the proper understanding of how to go about doing so without applying a deficit lens.

In an effort to find rationale behind poor school performance and achievement, too often educators project the problem to be within students, their families, and their communities, rather than as an issue within the school system itself (Valencia, 2006). For example, much of the discourse around the disproportionate underachievement of Communities of Color is often projected as if those individuals lack the ability to achieve at the level of traditional standards, however critical examination of schools and other social systems prove otherwise. Historically, Communities of Color have been given limited access to traditional forms of capital, yet are expected to thrive in the same ways as their more advantaged counterparts. The third theoretical framework used to guide this study is Tara Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth theory. Through this theory, Yosso challenges educators to stop seeing marginalized groups as lacking in cultural wealth due to limited access to traditional forms, and recognize that these communities have unique sets of experiences and knowledge that provides them non traditional cultural wealth.

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<sup>5</sup> Cultural deficit model attributes students' lack of educational success to characteristics that are assumed to be innate in their cultures and communities. Research and assumptions based in this deficit model thinking ignore contextual realities such as systematic oppression and inequalities and personal circumstances. Instead, it is assumed that because a person does not perform to standard that they either lack ability or intrinsic motivation because of their cultural background.

## Community Cultural Wealth

Tara J. Yosso (2005) defines Community Cultural Wealth as a:

Critical Race Theory (CRT) challenge to traditional interpretations of cultural capital. CRT shifts the research lens away from a deficit view of Communities of Color as places full of cultural poverty disadvantages, and instead focuses on and learns from the array of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged. (p. 69)

Embracing this shift in approach, Yosso would urge educators to take theoretical guidance such as that of Bronfenbrenner and Boocock's one step further and recognize that experiences of disadvantaged groups that are brought into the classroom are cultural assets in their own right. Further, this unique set of survival and cultural skills that disadvantaged groups face is a valuable knowledge base not only that they have, but that educators can lean from (Yosso, 2005).

Cultural capital is traditionally defined by accumulation of social and cultural assets such as education status and intellect, appearance, experiences in travel and the arts, and appearance (Bourdieu, 1986). However, the standard set to judge such accumulated wealth is based on the Eurocentric normative scale of what is deemed valuable. Yosso (2005), building on the work of Oliver & Shapiro (1995), argues that while accumulated assets of Communities of Color do not fall within the confines of the Eurocentric norm, these communities do indeed have cultural wealth. These areas of cultural capital are aspirational capital, linguistic capital, familial capital, social capital, navigational capital, and oppositional capital (Yosso, 2005).

- “*Aspirational Capital* refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers” (Yosso, 2005, p. 77).

- “*Linguistic capital* includes the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language an/or style” (Yosso, 2005, p. 78).
- “*Familial Capital* refers to those cultural knowledges nurtured among *familia* (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition...engages a commitment to community well-being and expands the concept of family to include a more broad understanding of kinship. ” (Yosso, 2005, p.78).
- *Social capital* includes the network of people and community resources that an individual has access to for support and guidance while navigating through the six social institutions (Yosso, 2005).
- *Navigational capital* refers to the unique skillset of People of Color that is gained by learning to navigate through social systems, even while burdened, that were not created with them in mind (Yosso, 2005).
- *Resistance capital* “refers to those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality (Yosso, 2005).

Each of these forms of capital is gained through navigation and negotiation of various forms of oppression. Many of these forms of capital will be further explored throughout this dissertation.

The theoretical frameworks used to scaffold the findings of this dissertation were chosen to (1) explore the ways in which students’ both in and out-of-school experiences influence how they engage school, (2) explore how Legacy High School’s functioning as a full-service community school considers and addresses the contextual circumstances in students’ life on a holistic level, and (3) acknowledge and honor the fact that the research population has a social history that is rooted in disadvantage, while maintaining its integrity and not deeming it deficient. Considering all of these elements in tandem lent to a theoretically sound investigation of the study’s research questions.



### **Chapter 3| The Roadmap: Methodology**

This chapter outlines the methodological approaches that were used to fully engage with Legacy High School, the people within the school and its community of study, and to answer the study's research questions. When conducting this study at Legacy High School, the four primary questions that guided the research were:

1. What attributes of the full-service community school model are reflected in Legacy High School's practices around supporting students' academic needs and development?
2. What attributes of the full-service community school model are reflected in Legacy High School's practices around supporting students' non-academic needs and development?
3. What attributes of the full-service community school model are reflected in Legacy High School's culture and climate?
4. How is Legacy High School's functioning as a full-service community school reflected in its integrated relations with the larger community?

#### **Methodology**

In order to best answer these questions from a qualitative research approach I combined the research methods of ethnography and intrinsic case study to complete what I have coined as an ethnographic intrinsic case study. Within this ethnographic intrinsic case study, observations, interviews, and document analysis were used to gain a deeper insight into the case of Legacy High School as a full-service community school.

*Ethnographic research* consists of studying groups of people in their natural settings as they go about their daily lives. During an ethnographic study, the researcher intimately, yet non-intrusively, enters the space of the observed and co-participates in the daily activities while creating an accumulated written record of activities, experiences, and observations (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). During these observations, the researcher focuses on the shared patterns and interactions of the group (Creswell, 2005; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Additionally, *case study* is a type of ethnography that is defined as “an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g., an activity, event, process, or individuals) based on extensive data collected” over a defined period of time (Creswell, 2005, p. 438). Case studies are used to make meaning of a localized experience of an entire “case”, “particular” person, or group (Compton-Lilly, 2013). Case studies focus on the “case” being observed to understand how their particular experiences yield inferences to larger phenomenon, yet still value the individual context of the experience. More specifically, intrinsic case studies focus on “a person, place, program, policy, institution, or other bounded case for the purpose of learning about that particular entity” (Compton-Lilly, 2013, p. 56; Stake, 1995).

Using these two research methods—ethnography and intrinsic case study--simultaneously lends to ethnographic intrinsic case study research. An ethnographic case study, as defined by Creswell (2005), is “a case analysis of a person, event, activity, or process set within a cultural perspective” (p. 438). For this study, the six-month ethnographic intrinsic case study consisted of me, as a researcher, becoming both a participant and non-participant observer within the Legacy High School community. While within this school, I participated in and observed the activities and interactions that took place. I also conducted formal and

informal interviews with faculty and staff, students, parents, school alumni, and other members of the school's community, to explore how the school and community members within this space make meaning of, participate in, and are influenced by the community school model as manifested at Legacy High School. Erickson (1986) states that qualitative research allows researchers to explore "[w]hat is happening here specifically? [and] [w]hat do these happenings mean to the people engaged in them?" (p. 124).

While the data collection for this study included gathering information from individuals, the individual participants were not the "case" itself, but a part of the case to be studied--Legacy High School, in its functioning as a full-service community school. However, the individual participants that were interviewed and observed in this research were used to better understand what happens at Legacy. Compton-Lily (2013) asserts that a "useful and informative intrinsic case study is in part contingent on the identification of compelling cases that highlight unique situations, challenges, or opportunities" (p. 56). The information provided by the research participants highlighted specific accounts within Legacy High School to help illustrate the role that Legacy plays in being an agent of social change, both within the organizational structure of the school and the larger community.

### **Research Site**

The site for this study was Legacy High School. When originally designing this study, prior to arriving at the school site, I intended to include the school's surrounding neighborhood as part of the research site and participant pool. However, at the advising of dissertation committee members, I decided to limit the definition of "community members" used for this study to those with some type of direct affiliation to the school (i.e., parent, alumni, Legacy advocate, etc.) who I had access to from *within* (insider connection, not necessarily proximally) the school. Likewise, once I arrived in the city and in the school's neighborhood, I recognized

that through gentrification, while many historical residents still remained in the neighborhood, much of surrounding school neighborhood had little affiliation with Legacy despite living in such close proximity to the school. Further, even the historical Legacy High School affiliates who had once lived in close proximity to the school and have since relocated, continue to remain affiliated with the school based on commitment rather than proximity. One of the findings of this study (which will be detailed later in the dissertation) was that the Legacy “community” is defined more based on relational affiliation, rather than by regional proximity. Considering this fact, while I still observed the relationship dynamic between the school and the regional community as part of the study, the participants for this study were made of community members by affiliation rather than regional proximity.

Once solidifying the research site as the immediate Legacy High School community, my goal was to unobtrusively be able to collect data and learn about the community school model, and the community at Legacy High School as much as and in any way (with integrity, of course) possible. These means included classroom, hallway, and learning and social setting observations; attending meetings (school and district level); formally and informally speaking with faculty/staff, students, parents, alumni, etc. Additionally, I recognized that in order to fully understand Legacy’s functioning and influence as a full-service community school, I first had to have a deep understanding of the school’s history in order to place its present day goals into a historical and holistic context.

Ultimately, Legacy was the selected site for this dissertation study because the school encompasses all of the elements of my initial research interests in one location. On a broader scale, my research goals initially sought to explore identifiable strategic partnerships between schools and their communities that centered on addressing students’ health needs, provided

academic, career, and vocational skills training through supplemental learning opportunities, promoted interpersonal and professional development, and provided the opportunity for students to acquire higher levels of social and cultural capital. I was also interested in the impact that these partnerships had on school and non-school factors of students' lives, the perceived benefit of these partnerships between the school and non-school agencies, and the ways in which school-community partnerships have social influence on the communities within which they exist. These broader research questions were developed prior to gaining a full understanding of the full-service community school model. After the shift in focus from a more general inquiry to the specified context of exploring these questions through a study conducted at one research site, I recognized that doing a case study analysis of one site was beneficial. Further, the use of one research site allowed for a more contextualized understanding of how socio-historical realities shape, not only a school's culture and climate over time, but how well a school adapts to those changes and addresses the needs that arise as a result.

Legacy High School has officially been identified as and has operated as a full-service community school within its school district for just over a decade. However, Legacy has a history of being an integral element of the larger community. According to preliminary conversations with some of Legacy's lead administrators the Legacy community members are very proactive in the school and have strongly valued input into the matters undertaken by and within the school. This acknowledged relationship between community members and Legacy High School makes Legacy High School and the surrounding community an ideal location to explore the perceptions of the role that a full-service community school model plays in the lives of its intended beneficiaries.

### **Demographic Snapshot of Legacy High School**

The official data collection period for this study was during the spring semester (February-June) of the 2014-2015 school year<sup>6</sup>. However, due to the delay in reporting of academic data, the demographic data shared here reflects the 2013-2014 school year<sup>7</sup>. The state's education data site reported that 275 students were enrolled in Legacy High School during the 2013-2014 school year. Of those 275 students, 244 identified as Black or African American, 14 identified as Hispanic or Latino, and 5 Identified as White. Three or fewer students identified in each of the other race/ethnicity categories, and four students' race/ethnic identities were not reported. In addition to race/ethnicity reporting, 237 of Legacy students were reported to qualify for free/reduced meals. Due to the economic factors that make up the school population, Legacy High School is a designated Title I school through ESEA.

As evidenced through this demographic, data Legacy High School is made up of a student body that has been traditionally underserved through race and income social structures. Coupling the demographic data of this population with the experiences that will be shared throughout this study gives important context. Each of the theoretical frameworks used to guide this study recognize how the social and historical realities of people's lives and backgrounds inform how they experience school.

### **Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity**

Prior to being extended an invitation to conduct my dissertation research at Legacy High School, one of the first things that I was warned of was the school community's protection of the school space. It was brought to my attention that Legacy is a school that is constantly being observed and researched. Because of this, many of the faculty, staff, parents, alumni, and even

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<sup>6</sup> The official data collection period of this study was February 2015 to June 2015 of the 2014-2015 school year. However, because I maintained a relationship with my research community, some of the findings reflected here are outside of that original research time period as some later interactions and experiences informed the study; these cases have been noted in the findings section.

<sup>7</sup> There were no significant variations in demographic enrollment trends between the two school years

students have grown skeptical of any outsider who seems to be entering the space and/or observing Legacy for self-motivated purposes, rather than with a genuine intention to become a part of the school community. Because this prevalent social dynamic, I was very cautious when entering the school space. While I understood and empathized with the school community regarding their protective nature and skepticism of outsiders, I recognized that the nature of my presence could indeed be alarming. I made it a point to continuously recognize and self-check my “outsiderness”, making sure never to over-impose my presence or my agenda. Keeping this in mind, I never introduced myself to students, faculty/staff, alumni, or community members as “a researcher” but I simply told them that I was there to learn more about the community school model at Legacy. I did not do this to deceive, but out of understanding that the word “researcher” has the potential to bring with it fear and alarm—especially to overly studied populations and communities. If anyone inquired further about my presence, I would indeed give more detail, but I felt that my choice of introduction allowed for a more genuine and organic introduction to occur.

My on-site data collection was originally scheduled to last from February 2, 2015 through mid-April of 2015. However, because of the trust that was built between the school administration and myself, I was welcomed to continue my research throughout the remainder of the school year (June 13, 2015). Within the first few weeks of being on the school’s campus, one of members of the administration staff told me, “ you know you will be here for the rest of the year, right? We like you.” Additionally, also early in my being on campus, I was encouraged by another staff member to include in my dissertation how quickly I was welcomed and accepted by both the student and adult community at school. These particular instances are notable because

(as will be described in further in Chapter 4) trust and skepticism of outsiders who enter into the protected space of the school is common among the Legacy community.

Additionally, because of the relationships built and the contributions that I made to the school, I was woven into the administrative and community fabric of the school in ways that extended beyond my role as a researcher. Some of these ways include, assisting students in academic areas, serving as a role model for students and mediating student conflicts, partnering with the school principal and administrative cabinet on strategic planning, and serving as support staff to the school. According to research, this level of involvement may have potentially shifted my intended role as a participant observer to “going native” (Hatch, 2002). This level of participation in the school’s social fabric and culture could have potentially influenced by data collection process in both positive and negative ways (see more on this in Chapter 6, under limitations).

### **Research Participants**

The population for this research study included individuals who are current or former direct affiliates of Legacy High School and its community. These individuals were representative of students, faculty and staff, parents, Legacy alumni, and Legacy community advocates. Because of the ethnographic nature of this study, all individuals in the school were indirectly research participants through being in the observed space.

This study included two types of participants—formal participants and informal participants. Given the nature of the research site, naturally all members of the population will not be formal participants. For purposes of clarity, formal participants for this study are the 21 participants who signed informed consent documentation and participated in a formal interview with me.



Among the 21 formal participants:

- 6 were classroom teachers
- 7 were current students
- 5 were administrator/lead staff members
- 2 were current parents of Legacy High School Students
- 1 was a parent of former legacy High School student
- 6 were alumni
- 13 were female; 7 were male; 1 preferred not to use a gender label.
- 2 were under the age 18
- 18 participants identified as African America, 2 identified as white, and 1 identified as other.

For the remaining research site population, those individuals were considered “informal participants” because they were included in observational findings and notes, but did not directly interact with me for purposes of the study. For these informal participants, in all write-ups of the research study, no specific identifiers are used to characterize them in the findings.

One notable point of reference about the research study’s population is the mutability of participant categories. For example, many of the parents of current Legacy High School students are also Legacy alumni; Legacy High School currently has seven staff members that were once Legacy High School students; one Legacy staff member is a parent of a current Legacy student, and most people who make up “ Legacy community members”, and that hold community influence on what takes place at Legacy High School, are alumni of Legacy—both recent and from decades past.

This sample set of research participants were able to give insight on influence that Legacy High School, and its available resources, may or may not have on, the students and/or the larger school community. This population is intended to produce a representative sample that could clearly make a case that illustrates ways in which Legacy High School functions as a full-service community school and its effectiveness in meeting its goals and mission. Participants for this intrinsic case study were initially recruited through convenience and snowball-sampling methods.

### **Participant Recruitment Methods**

Participant recruitment for this study was strongly dependent upon relationship building. Given the nature of vulnerability that comes with ethnography and the process of allowing an outsider into a personal community, I understood and respected the fact that I could not immediately recruit formal participants for this study. Additionally, because I recognized and respected the school space and community of Legacy High School, I wanted potential participants to have the opportunity to fully vet, trust, and accept me before I requested the sharing of any personal information or stories. Not only did this careful relationship building step and process aid in participant recruitment, but I am positive that it enriched the data gathered and shared in this dissertation because it gave room for participants to more freely and openly share with me as someone they trusted. Once relationships were established and fostered, participants were recruited using the following recruitment methods.

**Convenience Sampling.** Convenience Sampling is when the researcher selects individuals to participate in a study because participants are willing, available and/or volunteer to participate (Creswell, 2005). Once I began to understand the culture of the school, build relationships, establish trust with my population, and people understood my work, role, and

purpose for being on campus, many people were willing to participate in my research. Most of my formal participants were asked, and agreed, to do an interview, and others simply volunteered. Other informal participants also volunteered for me to observe their classes, sit in their offices with them during parts of the day, and attend meetings. Due to the built rapport between myself and the Legacy community, recruiting participants was done with little to no difficulty. No one whom I approached to participate in the study displayed any sign or sense of apprehension, skepticism, and/or fear towards participation.

**Snowball Sampling.** Snowball sampling derives from the researcher asking current research participants to recommend other individuals to participate in the study (Creswell, 2005). A few of my formal research participants were selected through snowball sampling. In some cases, it was another research participant who suggested that I speak with one of my formal participants, because it was believed that they had a unique perspective that could contribute to the study.

### **Data Collection: Phase I**

Within this intrinsic case study, four forms of qualitative data collection were used: non-participant observations, participant observations, one-on-one semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. See the Data Collection Matrix below (Table 1) to see a breakdown of how the data collection methods that were used to answer each of the research questions.

**Table 3.1 Data Collection Matrix**

<i>Research Question</i>	<i>Data Collection Source</i>
What attributes of the full-service community school model are reflected in Legacy High School's practices around supporting students' academic needs and development?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Official School and District data</li> <li>• Semi-structured participant interviews</li> <li>• Observations</li> </ul>
What attributes of the full-service community school model are reflected in Legacy High School's practices around supporting students' non-academic needs and development?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured participant interviews</li> <li>• Observations</li> </ul>
What attributes of the full-service community school model are reflected in Legacy High School's culture and climate?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• Secondary data/document analysis</li> <li>• Observations</li> </ul>
How is Legacy High School's functioning as a full-service community school reflected in its integrated relations with the larger community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• Secondary data/document analysis</li> <li>• Observations</li> </ul>

## Observations

**Non-participant Observations.** Non-participant observations consist of a an “outsider” entering into a space to observe from an advantageous (yet non-central) position the activities that take place within the research setting (Creswell, 2005). Non-participant observations allow a researcher to observe interactions, execution of policy, social culture and climate, and formal and informal activities of a community and/or population within a space without actively engaging with the individuals or participating in the activities. This form of observation is advantageous because its non-intrusive nature often allows gatekeepers and participants/individuals being observed to feel more comfortable (Creswell, 2005). The non-

participant perspective may also be advantageous for the researcher because it allows them to develop a birds-eye view of the setting. This is advantageous for both researcher and participants, because although the researcher is an outsider, they are still permitted some level of entrée into the research setting without the participant (the observed) becoming too vulnerable. However, non-participant observations may be limiting in the fact that they do not allow the researcher to gain a fully immersed perspective in the setting of study.

For this dissertation study, non-participant observations were to be used as the initial on-site data collection method.<sup>8</sup> My non-participant observations consisted of me walking the halls and observing interactions among students and teachers, noticing things that were posted on the walls, sitting in on classroom instruction time as well as in non-traditional learning environments (i.e., the library during small group tutoring/pullout sessions, the in-school suspension and credit recovery classes), sitting in and observing staff and community meetings, etc. During these observations I paid close attention to interpersonal relationship dynamics between students and their peers, adults and other adults, students and adults, students and resource providers, school affiliates and non-school affiliates, etc. By observing Legacy “in action” during in-class time, in the hallways, at school activities, after school, etc., I gained a widely informed perspective of Legacy High School as a school community. These observations were recorded through written field notes.

**Non-participant observations in non-school site settings.** Non-participant observations outside of the school-site allowed me to gain familiarity with the sociocultural dynamics of the community that surrounds Legacy High School<sup>9</sup>. Illustrated in Boocock’s

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<sup>8</sup> It was difficult to distinguish between which of my observations were non-participant versus participant due to how quickly I became an integrated part of the Legacy community.

<sup>9</sup> When I originally proposed this study, I indicated that some of my non-school setting, non-participant observations, would take place within the community surrounding my school site. However, due to safety reasons and altering the scope of community for this study, those observations were not fulfilled, and will thus not be

(1972) model of The Learning System, the school organization is socially situated in an ecological system that is contextualized by the larger influence of local and state politics, as well as social structures. Non-school site observations took place in public spaces, namely school board meetings and observing students in the neighborhood around the school after school. I also accompanied students and staff on an off campus fieldtrip afterschool, and attended a few sports events with faculty, staff, and students. I spent time in these spaces documenting interactions and conversations. During these observations, I paid particular attention to where youth and young adults spend recreational time, how individuals discussed and displayed community morale, and how youth and adults at Legacy interact. More specifically, I paid attention to how individuals discussed Legacy High School as an organization. This observational method was an appropriate precursor to participant observations because it allowed a level of trust to be built between myself and my research participants and their community, leading to more transparent interactions and fruitful sharing of experiences.

**Participant observations within the school site.** Creswell (2005) discusses the advantage of changing observational roles between non-participant and participant perspectives. This change in observational role is necessary when a researcher needs to adapt, in order to gain a different, and more specifically, a deeper perspective. A participant observer gains insight into their research population by personally becoming involved in the activities that take place within a research site. In becoming a participant observer, the researcher has the potential to become more comfortable in the research setting as well as the opportunity to build trusting relationships with the study's participants. Further, through participant observations,

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included in the dissertation findings.

the researcher shifts from being an “outsider” in the research setting to being an “insider” (Creswell, 2005). Although it is difficult to take notes while being a participant observer, as noted in the description of ethnographic research, the active engagement with participants allows for a researcher to gain a more intimate and in-depth understanding of the cultural phenomenon that take place within a research setting and community. This type of detailed observation is useful in an intrinsic case study because intrinsic case studies seek to gain information and understanding of the uniquely interesting characteristics of a particular case.

While the non-participant observational role of my research allowed me to gain an initial understanding of my setting and population, as well as begin to build relationships with participants, participant observations were necessary to more fully explore the research questions. Participant observations allowed a more realistic and personalized understanding of the experiences that members of Legacy High School community have and to gain an “insider’s” perspective on the functioning of Legacy High School. By interacting with students, faculty and staff, families, and community members, I was able to more deeply explore the relationship between the designation of Legacy as a full-service community school and the influences that its resources and intended mission have on the people that it is intended to serve.

During this study, I considered myself to be participating in participant observations anytime that I was actively engaging with students, faculty/staff, parents, or community members in an official or unofficial activity. These times included me participating in the discussions of the particular class that I was observing, tutoring a student, actively engaging with students during their afterschool programs, serving as a member of a committee that consisted of the principal, faculty, parents, alumni, and community members to improve the

school, engaging with members of the Legacy community in conversations, etc. Although my initial intent was to have very distinctive moments of serving as a participant versus non-participant observer, given the way that I was quickly incorporated into the Legacy community muddled those distinctions.

### ***One-on-One Interviews***

Once researcher presence is established, by interacting with the population and participants through non-participant and participant observations, one-on-one interviews were added to the data collection process. Semi-structured, one-on-one interviews are ideal for garnering the perspectives of participants who are not hesitant to speak and are able to articulate their thoughts and ideas (Creswell, 2005). The information sought through interviews is the unique perspectives of individuals within the research population, that cannot be gained through observations. In qualitative research, interviews most often occur when researchers ask research participants open-ended questions (Creswell, 2005) that will be used to illustrate the participants' lived experiences, thoughts, and/or perspectives. The open-ended nature of semi-structured, one-on-one interviews allows for the researcher to establish an interview protocol that probes the particular type of information they seek to explore but remains flexible for detailed feedback from interviewees. Under these circumstances both the interviewer and interviewee can engage in a "dynamic exchange of ideas" (Trainor, 2013, p. 126) to fully shape and illustrate the interviewees' perspective on the research subject.

The first round of data collection for this ethnographic intrinsic case study consisted of 18 one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Each interview consisted of 25-30 guiding questions and lasted between 30 minutes to 1 hour (depending on how long the participants spoke). The interviews were audio recorded. The interview protocols varied based on which



category the participant fit in (i.e., student, teacher, administrator, alumni, etc.). While the interview scripts were constructed in a way that targeted participants' thoughts and experiences on particular areas, the open-ended nature of the questions and interview format allowed for participants and myself to expand and improvise in order to offer and gain a more holistic perspective—a perspective that is not always possible through close-ended questions and answers. In some cases, the interview protocol was changed, or two separate protocols were combined, to fully gain the perspective of a participant, if they fit into more than one category (i.e., parent and alumni). Additionally, although each interview followed the interview protocol, in an effort to not break up the natural flow of dialogue, some follow up questions were asked to urge interview participants to elaborate on a topic, and some questions were asked out of sequential order. *Note:* After the first few interviews took place and the process was reflected on, the interview questions were fine-tuned (with the assistance of a colleague to provide an “interviewers” perspective) in order to gain the most full and revealing answers from the participants. Although this slightly changed the data collection process, I do not believe that its alterations were significant enough to skew the findings and data analysis process.

Each interview took place in an agreed upon location between the participant and myself. These locations included participants' home, at the school site, or at a nearby public establishment. For this dissertation study, the purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to gain in-depth and personalized perspectives on Legacy High School, how people understand it as a full-service community school, and how they experience what the school has to offer. In order to garner the most organic responses, I never explicitly shared my research questions with my participants, but asked them questions that I believed would lead them to touching on

topics of discussion that would allow me to make inferences in the context of the study's research questions.

Although a popular and useful method for qualitative data collection, interviews have been deemed to provide a limited scope and should be used in conjunction with other data collection methods (such as observations, document analysis, surveys, etc.). (Trainor, 2013). This dissertation used one-on-one interviews to gather the personal perspectives of participants regarding their relationship with the Legacy High School community school facility/resources, and non-participant and participant observations to allow the researcher immersion opportunities to gain familiarity with the research site.

### **Interview Transcribing**

Once all of the semi-structured interviews were complete, they were sent to a professional transcribing company to be transcribed<sup>10</sup>. The interviews were transcribed using a semi-verbatim method, meaning that they were transcribed word for word, minus verbal pauses and audible thought processing. Seidman (2006) suggests that transcribing the interview in its entirety, rather than simply parts of the transcriptions allows for more accuracy and minimal initial researcher bias. Upon receiving the transcriptions from the third-party transcriptionist, each transcribed interview was reviewed while listening to the corresponding audio recording to check for accuracy. Changes were made to the interview transcriptions as necessary.

Once all interviews were transcribed, each interviewed research participant was offered (as promised in the informed consent form presented before the interview took place) the opportunity to obtain a copy of their transcribed interview for review, review it with me,

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<sup>10</sup> It was my original intention, as well as previously proposed that I would transcribe each interview myself, however for the sake of time the process was outsourced to a professional company.

rescind their participation fully, or identify any parts of the interview that they did not want to include. Only a few participants requested a copy of their interview transcription, and no participants requested any changes or to rescind their agreement to have their interview included in the data pool. The data collected through observations and interviews was triangulated through document analysis.

### **Data Triangulation and Document Analysis**

Denzin (1978) describes methodological data triangulation as the process of corroborating data through two or more different data collection methods. Data triangulation is a type of checks and balances of data which provides validity to the findings by gathering information from multiple sources to assure that the data collected is accurate (Creswell, 2005). For this study, data triangulation was garnered through the qualitative methodological approach document analysis.

**Document analysis.** Document analysis is a systematic procedure of reviewing and evaluating documents as raw data in order to make empirically based meaning of the information being sought after and presented within the research study (Bowen, 2009). Under the methodological specifications of document analysis, these documents have not already been analyzed or reviewed in previous research, but are used as supplemental data for the current research study. Merriam (1988) asserts “documents of all types can help the researcher uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research problem” (p. 118). The materials gathered for this qualitative document analysis were reviewed, analyzed, and used to compare the research participants’ perceived influence (as gathered through interviews and observations) of the resources and services provided via the full-service community school infrastructure at Legacy High School to the actual reported

impact of these resources as documented through primary and secondary data sources.

The documents analyzed for this study include state and district reported data and assessments, school level assessments, school policies and procedures, the school's student and parent handbook, program descriptions and event flyers, etc. I used the information published in these documents to understand the demographic context of the school, school and student progress overtime, the policies and procedures in place and the programs and the school and community programs that the school hosts, promotes, and participates in. Document analysis is an advantageous supplemental research method for qualitative case studies because it provides empirically based contextualization to data provided by participants (Bowen, 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). "Such information and insight can help researchers understand the historical roots of specific issues and can indicate the conditions that impinge upon the phenomena currently under investigation"(Bowen, 2009, p. 29). For this particular case study, not only did document analysis make meaning of the data collected from research participants, but it lends to the future research and policy recommendations that derive from this study to help school leaders better evaluate their programs with regard to how their goals and mission are being perceived and received by its users.

### **Data Analysis**

The data obtained in this study was analyzed through a thematic analysis system. Thematic analysis focuses on identifying, examining, and organizing patterns—themes—found in the collected data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). These themes were used to categorize the information gathered through observations, interviews, and document review in order to gain a holistic understanding of the way members of the Legacy High School community interact with, perceive, and gauge the utility and availability of the resources and non-tangible benefits of the

community school organizational structure. Braun and Clarke (2006) assert that thematic analysis allows researchers to make “thematized meanings” of the data collected from the research sites, population, and participants (p. 78).

The data collected in this study are derived from researcher observations and understanding and five different points of contact or participant types (students, school administrator/teacher/staff member, parent of Legacy student(s), Legacy alumni, and extended community members). These categories are not static but are not mutually exclusive. For example research interactions and responses from a parent might also be reflective of their position as a community member. Or, interactions with a Legacy alumni member might also reveal that they are a parent of a current Legacy student and interview responses or observations might reflect the intersectionality of both (or more) of those participant roles. Thus, although the data was collected from various points of contact/types of participants, all data will be analyzed together and the findings will be represented in a summative way.

Comprehensive thematic data analysis consists of multiple stages of analysis. The data in this study was drawn from various stages identified by multiple researchers. The thematic analysis conducted for this study included: (1) documentation, (2) familiarization with data, (3) conceptualization and coding, (4) examining relationships, and (5) authenticating conclusions.

### **Documentation**

According to Russell Schutt (2011) qualitative data analysis begins immediately upon entering a research site. Data analysis is an on-going process that begins at the onset of data collection and continues throughout the research process (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Hatch, 2002; Braun and Clarke, 2006; Schutt, 2011). The process of documentation encompasses reviewing all interview transcriptions and field notes as they are gathered (rather than waiting to

review them once all data has been collected). During this initial review, notes should be taken as a way to document your understanding and make meanings of what is observed.

For this study, the documentation step occurred immediately upon arrival at the site. While taking observational notes, I notated what I observed around me--the things I saw, the things I did not see, the things I heard, and what was unheard. I took note of interactions--interactions among students, among staff, between students and adults, between those who were currently affiliated with the school and those who have been removed. I paid attention to how people observed, treated, and became relational with me, and how these interactions changed and developed over time. Further, I paid attention to how the school was decorated, the things that were hung on the walls, and the messages that were conveyed by these items. I paid attention and noted how student behavior was addressed and those who were involved in disciplinary issues. In addition to the general social environment, I paid attention to what took place in more structured environments within the school. I observed and documented interactions that took place within the classroom setting: how teachers communicated expectations and responded. I noted how students responded to students and adult figures, etc. Additionally, although I primarily limited my scope of research to the nuclear Legacy High School community, on the occasions that I attended district school board meetings or casually discussed Legacy High School others, I paid attention to and noted the way people talked about and described Legacy High School and its students and staff; I made notations of my observations of larger community surrounding the school. I noted anything that I believed would enhance my data gathering.

### **Familiarization with Data**

Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that it is necessary to review the data multiple times prior to coding. Familiarization with the data in this way consists of repeated and active reading of the

data (i.e. field notes and interview transcriptions). This step in the thematic data analysis allows the researcher to start gathering ideas of potential codes, noting what stands out to them during data collection. A distinct feature in this step is transcribing. Riessman (1993) and Braun and Clarke (2006) discuss in their work the importance of interview transcription to this phase. They assert that transcribing interviews should not be taken as a passive task that occurs during data collection, but is an actual process in which a greater understanding of data occurs. Paying attention to elements as seemingly menial as punctuations and inflection can assist in finding deeper connections throughout data.

In this study, my familiarization with the data came through, reading and re-reading my observational notes overtime, paying particular attention to how interactions and discussions may have shifted over time, or based on things happening within the research site. Additionally, after each interview, while I did not immediately listen to the audio recording, I took the time to reflect on and mentally process the conversation had. I notated things that stood out to me as interesting or insightful.

### **Conceptualizing and Coding**

Conceptualizing and coding are the processes in which all data are gathered together to find overarching themes and patterns and keeping a detailed and systematic record of what data correlates with what theme (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Hatch, 2002; Creswell, 2005, Braun and Clarke, 2006). Coding is the method through which a researcher analyzes and interprets the information gathered within the research site and/or from participants to make deeper meaning. More specifically, coding is the process in which findings are interpreted and divided into segments that have similar associations.

The process of coding the observational data entailed two parts. First, I looked for and notated repetitive patterns in the things that occurred around me (i.e., in interactions between students and adults, the way particular issues were discussed amongst large groups, disciplinary practices, etc.). Secondly, I organized the findings in ways that spoke to each of the study's four research questions.

Like coding of the observed data, the interview data was also coded in two parts. First, I noted repetitive patterns in themes that came up, and secondly, organized the findings in a way that lent to answering the study's overarching research questions. For this study, although the literature implied what areas of students' academic and non-academic identities, as well as the influences on the larger community, that the full-service community school is purposed to address, I did not go into the study with predetermined themes. Instead, my themes organically arose from the similarities of participants' responses. However, when designing this study I expected that the following issues would arise: discipline policies and practices, school culture and climate, attendance, the addressing of physical and mental health needs, interpersonal relationships, feelings about safety, etc., therefore the interview protocols were designed in such away to lead participants to address some of the above themes without a direct request. Further, for this study's second research question: "What attributes of the full-service community school model are reflected in Legacy High School's practices around supporting students' non-academic needs and development?" coded themes were designated by similarities in what I observed and the way participants discussed how issues such as extracurricular activities, social and emotional development, discipline issues, interpersonal relationships, etc.

Organically devised themes, rather than predetermined themes, were valuable in this study because it allowed for me as a researcher to gain an understanding of the uniquely



particular happenings at Legacy High School. Again, the purpose of an intrinsic case study is to learn about a particular entity, rather than exploring an issue on a general and broader scale (Stake, 1995; Compton-Lily, 2013), therefore not approaching the study with predetermined themes allowed for getting to know the case of Legacy High School in a micro-level contextualized way. Finally, if other unique issues were discovered through data analysis, that were not particular to any specific thematic pattern, but was indeed revealing to the influences of the full-service community school model within the context of Legacy High School, these things were also documented, coded, and included in the presentation of findings.

### **Authenticating Conclusions**

Russell Schutt (2011) describes this stage of data analysis as evaluating the authenticity of the information obtained. This step considers the conditions under which data is collected and how these conditions may or may not taint the validity. During this stage in data analysis, Schutt urges researchers to question things such as whether or not the informant (the individual providing the data) trusts the researcher, has a personal relationship with researcher, felt coerced, had reason to lie, etc. to the extent that the validity of information can be called into question. To critically assess the authenticity of the data, the researcher should compare what the participant says or does when the researcher is around with what is said or done in the participant's natural setting and/or when the researcher is not present. Schutt (2011) argues that a good qualitative researcher should be able to understand the ways in which research participant's actions, words, statements, and information that they withhold speak to the larger social process.

This stage of analysis was accomplished by fact checking data transcripts with participants to ensure that the transcriptions reflected what the participant intended to convey.

Further, I attempt to recognize the social cues of the participants and assess how those cues are representative of the issues surrounding what this study sought to address. For example, whenever I felt that a participant was holding back an answering or answering in a way to simply “say the right thing”, I took note of that. Under this stipulation there were two interview participants, in which questions around the authenticity of the data arose, therefore these interviews were removed from the final pool of included data.

## **Data Collection: Phase II**

### **Rationale for a Second Phase of Data Collection**

After the first round of data collection and analysis, there were still unanswered questions about the full-service community school model at Legacy High School. In the original approach to this study (although it considered historical context in the framing of Legacy High School) I failed to look at how the full-service community school model evolved as a part of the identity of Legacy. I prematurely approached the research site and my research participants with the following presumptions:

**Presumption 1: Legacy High School actively identifies itself as full-service community school.**

I approached this research study with the intention to explore the organizational structure of the full-service community school model through conducting an ethnographic, intrinsic case study of Legacy High School. When designing this study, however, I prematurely assumed that because the district promotes the full-service community school model, and Legacy is one of the district’s earliest examples of a school that is considered a full-service community school, that the Legacy community actively identifies as a full-service community school and embodies that identity in all that they do.

For example, Legacy High School prides itself on producing some of the most world-renowned professional athletes and entertainers—being nicknamed “Home of the Champs”<sup>11</sup>. The faculty, staff, current students, and alumni embody this pride in all that they do. This slogan is on t-shirts, on the walls, written in school publications, and verbalized throughout the school. This nickname is used almost as a badge of honor. Despite the fact that Legacy is a historical success in sports, the term “champions” extends beyond sports, and through academic excellence and citizenship when faculty and staff refer to this status to encourage Legacy students. When students participate in friendly banter with students from other schools, they often gloat of being from the “Home of the Champs”. Even students who do not participate in the athletic program embody being “a Champ”. I found that in this study’s interviews “Home of the Champs” was stated by multiple participants (including students, parents, and alumni). “Home of the Champs” is an entrenched part of Legacy’s identity and is embedded in the school’s identity.

However, this same vigor around being a full-service community school was not the case as I had presumed. Legacy High School has history of being a school that belongs to the community, due to high community investment. The school has always been committed to the community, and the community has always been committed to the school—even without the designation as “full-service” community school. Additionally, the school has created and sustained strategic partnerships with outside organizations to supplement the instruction and supports that are in the school. However, these implementations are not done in the name of being a full-service community school. Therefore, I found that even though the school community associates itself as a “community school” many do so drawing on the de facto relationship that the Legacy has with its community rather than its FSCS designation.

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<sup>11</sup> The school’s nickname has been changed to maintain anonymity.

From my observations, when school leadership, faculty, and students discuss Legacy High School, rarely is it introduced and/or initially identified as a “full-service community school”. There are indeed places in which the school refers itself as full-service community school. This designation is sometimes mentioned and considered in school improvement planning, and in other spaces, but not on a consistent basis that shows an embedded nature of the full-service community school identity. Unlike the active and all encompassing identification of Legacy being “Home of the Champs”, while Legacy does acknowledge that it is a full-service community school, this recognition is done more in a passive rather than active way.

On a school website that I located at my initial discovery of Legacy High School (prior to beginning the process of my access to the school as a research site) the mission statement published on that site identified Legacy High School as a Full-Service Community School that provides rigorous instruction and health and social services to support students and their families. However, each of the websites that published that particular mission statement were outdated. Contrarily, in more recent versions of both the school’s mission statement, while the school’s utility of strategic partnerships is acknowledged, it does not specifically identify Legacy as a full-service community school. In fact, in a 165-page self-study conducted by Legacy faculty and staff as a requirement for receiving accreditation, the term “Full-Service” was only used once—mentioned in the context of the district’s larger goals around full-service community schools; and the term “community school” twice. The designation “full-service community school” was not used at all.

The above awareness and denotation in no way minimizes recognition of the schools commitment to community and/or use of strategic partnerships to enhance the school

environment. However it did leave room for me to question and further explore if and how much the full-service community school model is enmeshed in the school's identity. Just as Legacy High School embodies their identity as "The School of Champions"; I presumed that the same intensity with which they identified as the "The School of Champions" was the same intensity with which they embodied their identity as a full-service community school. This finding, urged me to more deeply explore the way in which Legacy High School's affiliates recognize the school as a full service community school and embody that designation in all aspects of the school's functioning and culture. The recognition of this presumption, and the impact that it had on the data collection and findings, called for more in-depth look into the nature of how closely the school's "full-service community school" designation was indeed enmeshed into the school's identity. To more fully understand the relationship between the school's full-service community designation and its identity, more data was need to strategically target individuals who could speak on the nature of this relationship.

**Presumption 2: Participants had at least a basic understanding of a full-service community school.**

Although my interview protocol asked participants: "[School District] considers Legacy<sup>12</sup> High School a full-service community school, what does that mean to you?" I assumed that because the school was a full-service community school model that my participants (students and adults) had at least a basic understanding of what a "full-service community school" was. In many cases I found that both student and adult participants, in fact, did not understand what a full-service community school was. In many cases, participants assumed that the title of community school we indicative of the strong

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<sup>12</sup> During the interviews, the real name of the school was used. The quoted questions have been changed to use the pseudonym of the school created for this

relationship between the school and the community, and the influence that the community has on the school. Further, although not certain, participants often assumed that they were considered a full-service school because they had a health clinic on campus. During other times where participants did not offer a guess to what it meant to be a full-service community school, I often offered them the definition of a full-service community school and examples of what Legacy offered that put them in the realm of being a full-service community school. Unfortunately, after doing this, I realized that because I gave my participants the definition and examples of the full-service community school practices, that I therefore could have potentially skewed their response to the interview question that followed: “In what ways do you believe Legacy lives up to being a community school? In what ways does it fall short?”

Additionally, this presumption hindered me, as a researcher, from immediately recognizing Presumption 1, thus limiting the level of contextual data that I collected. Prematurely presuming that my research participants had a basic understanding of the full-service community school model, caused me to unknowingly ignore the importance of exploring how well the full-service community school organizational structure was a common understanding of school affiliates. Becoming aware of this presumption, and recognizing the misstep it caused in the research methodology, substantiated the need for further data collection to be done to explore participants’ understanding of the full-service community school model as it is implemented and lived out at Legacy.

**Presumption 3: The surrounding community was aware that Legacy High School is a full-service community school and embraces this organizational structure.**

Presuming that the full-service community school designation was fully incorporated into the school’s identity and culture, as well as fully understood by the direct affiliates of

Legacy, caused me to further approach the research with the assumption that the surrounding community was aware that there was a full-service community school in the area, bought into its goals and presence, and utilized the resources available to them as intended through the full-service community school infrastructure. Recognizing that the larger community (those not necessarily affiliated with Legacy High School, but lived in the area) did not utilize the resources available to them (in the way that literature describes as the purpose of the full-service community school) revealed to me the need to further explore how establishing Legacy as a full-service community school was discussed both internally and externally.

Recognizing this presumption called to question the initial designation and introduction of Legacy High School as full-service community school. More deeply, this presumption called for the exploration of how the process of designating Legacy High School was discussed, and how members of the community were included in that discussion. Additionally, as time has passed, and Legacy has undergone numerous changes implicated by both changes in the school's organizational structure as well as changes influenced by changes in the chronosystem of society (as defined by Bronfenbrenner), a deeper understanding of the socio-historical context of the full-service community school designation was needed.

In the midst of the first round of data analysis, a gap in the findings and my satisfactory understanding of the full-service community school organizational structure at Legacy High School revealed that a second round of data collection was needed. To fill the gaps in the studies findings, the research required a more in-depth study of the discourse around Legacy being designated as a full-service community school. This second phase of data collection included a more in-depth and strategic document analysis as well as recruiting more interview participants through the use of a targeted sampling.

## **Data Collection Phase II Methodology**

### **Data Collection Phase II Document Analysis**

Document analysis for the second phase of data collection was strategically focused on archived school board meetings that revealed the organizational bureaucracy regarding Legacy High School being designated by the school district as a full service community school. The initial phase of document analysis for this study consisted more so of reviewing recent documents and data that offered insight into the current state of Legacy's FSCS designation. However, during the first round of data-collection it became clear that the influence that the school's full-service community school designation has on academic and non-academic aspects of students' lives, the climate and culture of the school, and on the community, is rooted in the historical context of the school and the evolution of the school's organizational structure overtime. For this study, while I initially did supplement the present day happenings of the school with the historical context, it was not until the second round of data collection that the exploring of research questions became deeply rooted in historical context. Thus, the document analysis of the second phase of data collection focused on archived school board meeting minutes from 2004 through the present, that discuss the evolution of the decision making process around Legacy High School's organizational structure and functioning as a full-service community school.

### **Target-Sampling**

A target-sampling frame "is a group of individuals (or group of organizations) with some common defining characteristic that the researcher can identify and study" (Creswell, 2005, p. 145). Because this study has a component that considers the historical context of the Full-Service Community School use at Legacy, using a target sampling method allowed me to target participants who could speak to the evolution of the school. These targeted participants,



participated in this study both formally (through formal interviews) and informally (through observations and informal conversations and contacts). These participants included people who had generational connections to Legacy, those who could speak on Legacy High School during the timeframe that the school first opened the health clinic on campus, and through the many changes of both district and site-level leadership, organizational structures of the school, and the discourse and buy-in around the full-service community school designation and operation. The targeted participants of this second phase of data collection included one student attended the school the year following the opening of the school's health clinic, and four current members of the administration and teaching staff that were at the school during the height of some of Legacy's organizational changes around the time of it beginning to function as a FSCS.

### **Data Collection Phase II Interviews**

The second round of interviews for this study were very purposeful in the questions they asked and insight and information they sought to acquire. This set of interviews was also guided by a semi-structured interview protocol (Data Collection Phase II Interview Protocol in appendices) allowing participants to more freely share their experience in a narrative format, and me as the interviewer to probe for more detail when necessary. This interview protocol was designed to guide participants to discuss the evolutionary process of Legacy High School being designated and identified as a full-service community school. Further, it urged interview participants to be reflective on how school affiliates and the community responded to the school's becoming a full-service community school, and how the social and historical context of the school played a role in how Legacy's full-service community school model was accepted, implemented, discussed, and maintained.

### **Phase II of Data Analysis**

All data collected during this phase of data collection was handled with the same care and discretion as the data in Data Collection Phase I. The data collected during the second phase of data collection was analyzed using the same methods as described in Data Analysis Phase I. The same professional third-party transcription company that was used to transcribe interviews, and the interviews were thematically coded using the same method. Once coded, all data (from Data Collection Phase I and II) was analyzed together and is collectively represented in the final findings of this dissertation study.

### **Methodological Delimitations and Limitations**

As with any research endeavor, there are limitations to this study.

#### **Delimitations**

Although the study was originally designed to gain a better understanding of the full-service community school model, because my study was limited to only one school/research site, the findings presented here are only applicable to the particular context of Legacy High School and should cautiously be applied to a more general understanding of the full-service community school model. In other words, the findings of this study would be different if another research site was selected, or if multiple sites were studied in tandem to provide a broader knowledge base of the school model. However, the ethnographic case study methodological approach was chosen for this study in order to fully examine the context of the school experiences in a qualitative and contextualized way, as opposed to quantitatively which is the traditional method of studying schools.

#### **Limitations**

One limitation of this study was not being able to conduct a formal interview with the current school site leader. Although Legacy's site-leader fully supported the research study, and welcomed my presence in into the Legacy school community, due to high demands of meeting

school needs and scheduling made setting time to conduct an interview very difficult. While she gave me permission to include some things from our informal dialogues, I was not able to specifically speak with her about the full-service community school model at Legacy in a targeted way. This missing perspective limits the research findings from being triangulated with the perspective of the individual responsible for holding the school's vision, identity, climate, and culture. This perspective would have been valuable to this study to gain a better understanding of to what extent Legacy identifies as a full-service community school, which of the school's programs, partnerships, and other efforts are in place because of the school's full-service designation, and how the school keeps track of how the full-service community school model speaks to the areas that were the focus of this study.

Finally, the limitation that I most struggled with during the writing up of my findings for this dissertation were the regulations of both the University and school district ethic committees on concealment of geographical locations and specific places. While I wholeheartedly understand and honor the confidentiality of those who were generous enough to share their stories and experiences with me, not being able to share some of the specific details of location, names of organizations, communities, and even the name of the school, limits you in fully understanding and experiencing the awe inspiring occurrences that I seek share. The school and its community that is the epicenter of this dissertation is full of such a rich history and legacy, and to strip it of its name, strips it of its character, of its depth, and my ability to convey how pivotal this place and its people are in the struggle towards giving all students the opportunity to have quality school and educational experiences.

## **Chapter 4| Take-Off: Preliminary Findings and Historical Context**

The original goal of this dissertation was to come to know and understand the various ways in which the full-service community school model influences the lives of the students and community that it is intended to serve. I set out to do this by conducting an ethnographic intrinsic case study at one particular school, Legacy High School, that functions as a full-service community school. The quest for my understanding of the full-service community school model was guided by the following research questions:

1. What attributes of the full-service community school model are reflected in Legacy High School's practices around supporting students' academic needs and development?
2. What attributes of the full-service community school model are reflected in Legacy High School's practices around supporting students' non-academic needs and development?
3. What attributes of the full-service community school model are reflected in Legacy High School's culture and climate?
4. How is Legacy High School's functioning as a full-service community school reflected in its integrated relations with the larger community?

What I found throughout my study of Legacy High School is that while I did indeed come to understand the full-service community school model more than before, much of what I learned was about the nature of the school itself. Additionally, to fully understand what takes place at Legacy in its present state first required an understanding of both the school and its community's history. What I learned, experienced, and documented during my time at Legacy High School can neither be fully attributed to, nor isolated from, the fact that this school began the process of becoming a full-service community school nearly a decade ago. While the full-service

community school infrastructure at Legacy High School does indeed play a large role in the everyday functions and growth of the school, and in its ability to more holistically serve students, it is not the sole influencer of the school's commitment to positively influence the lives its students, their families, and community. There are very unique aspects of the nature of the school's environment, climate, and culture that shape what takes place everyday at Legacy High School. The functioning of Legacy High School as a full-service community school has indeed enhanced the instruction and social development of students that take place at the school. However, what I really came to understand is that Legacy High School embodies "community" in ways that extend far beyond the definition and the school's designation of full-service community school, and it is the school's historically innate community-focused culture that is its largest catalyst of influence. Legacy High School has been described as the heartbeat of the small historical community within which it exists, as well as to the students that it serves.

### **Preliminary Findings**

Prior to knowing exactly what a full-service community school was by name, I was confident in my belief that in order for schools to fully meet the needs of students—especially students with the highest needs—the school system had to rethink the ways in which it approached students and schooling. It was (and remains) my fervent and unequivocal belief that if schools fostered strategic partnerships with individuals, institutions, and organizations that were not traditionally involved in the schooling process, the outcome of school impact and influence could be greater. I believe that schools need to first acknowledge and find ways to address the non-school factors that have a way of impinging on the learning process (i.e., physical and mental health challenges, economic hardship, non-traditional family constructs, community and neighborhood realities, etc.) before it can fully engage students in learning. After developing these personal convictions about what education and school should look like, I

learned of the full-service community school model and was eventually introduced to Legacy High School.

The initial research on Legacy High School for this study, of course, began with a common Google search. Google directed me to the school's independent and district websites. The search mostly returned sports highlights; as I later found out, Legacy was a leading school in athletics. In addition to sports highlights, some articles that stood out to me were a newspaper article of a recent graduate who prematurely lost his life to violence and another that described a situation around student residency that begged the question of students' access to schools and school resources<sup>13</sup>. Finally, while I read through many of these pieces of information that made up the public picture of the school that I would come to know so intimately, I found an article published by a major local newspaper in early 2012 about Legacy High School becoming a full-service community school. It was through this short article that I learned that Legacy High School had its very own health and wellness clinic, youth and family center, music and dance studios, and a learning lab. It was also through this article that I first learned what a full-service community school was by name.

I continued to follow Legacy through Internet media. I subscribed to Google Alerts to receive daily notifications when Legacy was mentioned in the news. Most of the alerts returned sports highlights, but others mentioned school and district information. The findings that were most intriguing to me were the scholarly articles and studies that had mentioned or used Legacy High School as a subject of research. While I was at first disappointed that my study of Legacy High School would be repeating the work of others before me, I was motivated to continue when I realized two things: (1) Legacy High School, and the community in which it is situated, has a

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<sup>13</sup> The context of this news story was very similar to the question of access to school resources studied in my master's thesis research (Anderson, 2012).

rich history that continues to shape what happens within the school as well as how outsiders perceive, collaborate with, and partner with the school; and (2) very little research or talk about the school as an academic learning environment had been conducted and/or documented since before the school began functioning as a full-service community school. This made me curious whether the full-service community school model at Legacy was making any difference in the lives of students. My preliminary research found that previous changes to Legacy's organizational structure and curriculum focus had not reached the desired outcomes for student improvement. However, there was minimal research on the impact of the school since reorganizing as a full-service community school. Further, through research, I eventually found that there was limited qualitative research on any school that had transformed to a full-service community school, and thus was further motivated to do this work.

### **Existing Research/Literature on Legacy High School**

My initial search for scholarly work on Legacy High School found that two scholars<sup>14</sup> are the primary contributors to the academic studies on Legacy High School's educational reform efforts. Other scholars have intermittently included Legacy in their studies on various aspects of schooling and history.

In one author's (1996)<sup>15</sup> research on the relationship between urban schools and their urban environments, he described the city and Legacy's neighborhood as "a threat to the well-being of the school" (p.4). In a 2000 case study, another author interviewed members of the Legacy school community and one teacher described the perception of the school as follows:

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<sup>14</sup> To comply with the required anonymity of this study, some scholars and their work cannot be cited. Please note that the author of this dissertation has a full reference list and citations on file.

<sup>15</sup> Undisclosed Author 1.

Well people probably think the worst, you know. That it is full of criminals and violence... And that comes from the newspapers and the media. [Legacy<sup>16</sup>] is in a very poor community as you can see, and people associate being poor with crime (Undisclosed Author 2, 2000, p. 94).

The author further describes the perception of the school and its surrounding community:

“...the worst high school in the city is buttressed by the fact that it is located in one of the most economically deprived communities in [the city]. In [the community] there are no banks, only one small grocery store, no hospital, and only a few fast food chains, which employ local youth labor. Many of the community’s small businesses are owned and operated by Asian immigrants and only a handful are owned by local Black residents. (Undisclosed Author 2, 2000, p. 95)

In one of the previously cited authors’ research, he noted that many Legacy students denied that they are poor; however, their identities and realities that are shaped by living in an impoverished community prove otherwise. He listed teen pregnancy, violence, and drug use among the many consequences of poverty that the students at Legacy deal with. These findings and contextual associations were published over a decade ago. However, even in present day, according to one of the school’s philanthropic partners (2014<sup>17</sup>), the geographic area of Legacy High School has some of the most striking health disparities in the nation. Consequently, there is a perpetual relationship among poverty, poor health, and connection to educational achievement (Birch & Gussow, 1970; Dryfoos, 1994). Unaddressed health needs leads to a lack of focus and student engagement in class as well as compromised school attendance (Coalition for Community

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<sup>16</sup> The actual name of the school was used in the original work. The pseudonym Legacy has been replaced with the school’s name to comply with confidentiality.

<sup>17</sup> Undisclosed Author 3



Schools, 2014; Dryfoos, 1994; Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002; National Research Council Institute of Medicine, 2004).

In 2000, one researcher (Undisclosed Author 2) conducted a study on the school's attempt at education reform through Afrocentric Transformation. At the time of his research, Legacy's school leaders were undergoing an attempt to address the low academic achievement through focus on "cultural histories, principles, and pedagogies." The researcher argued that this effort was "ineffective because the project failed to consider the ways in which poverty influenced the identities of the students within the school" (Undisclosed Author 2, 2000, p. 87). However, since that evaluation study concluded that the cultural curriculum approach to reforming Legacy High School did not prove fruitful, the school, school district, and community have made continued strides to improve the school through addressing many of the health and social needs that Legacy's students face.

### **First Introduction to Legacy High School**

During my initial conversation with a faculty affiliate of Legacy, one of the first things that I was told about Legacy High School was that the school has a rich history that is rooted in community and shaped by past and present students and staff members, as well as anyone else who is considered a part of the "Legacy Family". Additionally, because of the history of tension between Legacy High School's internal and community stakeholders and the district-level decision makers, a significant level of skepticism is presented to "outsiders" who propose change, offer assistance, or want to come in to "see what is going on at [Legacy]"<sup>18</sup>. Because of this fact, not only did my research agenda have to be vetted and approved by the district office responsible for external research and data, but it also had to be vetted and receive an unofficial stamp of approval by the "Legacy Family".

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<sup>18</sup> More in-depth discussion on this finding is available in the following chapter.

Finally, before embarking on an ethnographic study of Legacy, I realized that in order to fully understand anything that comes from Legacy High School, it was first imperative to understand the evolution of the school, how it became the school it is today, and what it is aiming to grow into. The current state of Legacy High School is still very much influenced by the historical context of its geographical location, sociopolitical context, and organizational development.

### **Historical Context of Legacy High School**

Legacy High School is located in an urban metropolitan city on the west coast of the United States. When it was founded in 1915, the school had limited courses and inadequate building infrastructure that only allowed the school to operate as a summer school with a vocational focus. It was not until nearly two decades later that Legacy was established as a comprehensive high school. Over the last century, the school community has experienced a variety of educational reform and organizational transformations that have been influenced by the socioeconomic dynamics of the neighborhood, reconfigurations of the school's organizational structure, national and localized tensions around race relations, and the overall waves of sociopolitical shifts over time.

Legacy High School is located in a city with a high minority population. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, an influx of minority groups immigrated to the area for blue-collar industrial jobs that were created by World War I. By the 1930s, the neighborhood in which Legacy is situated was a thriving community that was predominantly Black. However, during the late 1930s, like most of country, the area was impacted by the Depression and never fully recovered. By the 1950s, many people who once came to the area for employment opportunities began to move their families elsewhere. During the second half of the century, many of the city's residents were displaced in the name of urban renewal and revitalization, and the community

entered into a period of economic decline with a rise in unemployment, poverty, and urban decay.<sup>19</sup>

The public school district that Legacy High School is a part of, like most school systems in the United States, has a history rooted in segregated schooling and subpar educational opportunities for Black students. Having always served a majority Black student population, Legacy's evolution has been heavily influenced by the implications of race and class. One historian (2010<sup>20</sup>) noted that school segregation in the city where Legacy served a primarily Black (and at times all-Black) student population actually got worse after the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* decision that was intended to legally end school segregation and create better learning opportunities for Blacks. Instead, the *Brown* decision had little influence on improving the experiences for Black students at Legacy. Both before and after the *Brown* decision, parents continually voiced concerns to district officials regarding the "record of low expectation and achievement" of Legacy students (Undisclosed Author 4, 2010, p. 53). Most times these requests went unaddressed, and Legacy High School parents and community often (and to this day still do) feel that Legacy has been systematically underserved.

Over the years, staff, students, parents, and community members of Legacy have had to defend against the district's administrative threats of closing the school due to poor performance many times, while simultaneously having to fight and advocate for quality educational resources and high priority concerns for the success and stability of the school. During the 1950s and 1960s, some of the major complaints of Legacy parents, and parents in many other majority-minority schools in the area, were about the school's limited focus on student academic development. Instead the school promoted a focus on discipline and hygiene rather than

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<sup>19</sup> More in-depth historical context, direct quotes, and secondary source citations cannot be used to remain in compliance with IRB and anonymity regulations.

<sup>20</sup> Undisclosed Author 4

academic rigor and excellence (Undisclosed Author 4, 2010). In fact, one of the city's organizations that assessed fair employment practices conducted a study on institutional racism in the region in 1964. The study found that Legacy High School "revealed persistent inequalities in curriculum, administration, and treatment of students" (Undisclosed Author 4, 2010, p. 52). While Legacy parents only wanted their children to have challenging and quality school experiences, the school administration defended their subpar offerings by projecting ill preparation for high school standards and cultural deficit and deprivation thinking towards the students and their families. The lack of empathy and partnership culminated in high levels of tension and distrust between the school and district administration and the Black Legacy High School families (Undisclosed Author 4, 2010). There are still evidentiary remnants of this contentious relationship between the school and the district today.

The social tensions around race and class between Legacy High School parents and school administrators was only a micro-level reflection of the macro-level racial and class tensions that were taking place in the rest of the United States. In the mid-1960s, like in most other parts of the country, the Black community in the area in which Legacy High School is situated was embarking on social and political liberation. In response to de facto segregation that continued as a result of the federal government's failure to enforce efforts for equality such as *Brown v. Board of Education* and the Civil Rights Act (1964), Black activists began asserting and leveraging political power through their own means (Undisclosed Author 4, 2010).

### **Legacy's Involvement in the Black Power Movement**

Legacy High School is nestled at the center of a working-class community of Black families. During the mid-1960s, when parents and community members were displeased with the unaddressed concerns of both the school and community, they began participating in some of the

political actions common to the Black Power Movement of the time. Grassroots political activism, rooted in Black Power, became the way that the community sought to make the changes for school improvements from the school district. The West Coast city in which Legacy is situated was a leading location in the establishment of the Black Panther Party (BPP). The Black Panther Party was established as a militant self-defense organization that fought against the U.S. government to establish evolutionary socialism for communities of color (Baggins, 2002). Recognizing that communities of color were being systematically denied civil liberties such as government protection and support, housing, healthcare, and quality schools, this group organized Black community members and activists to fight for access to such resources.

During this time, community meetings, protests, and other demonstrations were common ways that the Legacy High School families and community members demanded response to their concerns about the poor schooling opportunities available to them. The involvement and influence of the Black Panther Party were key in supporting the students and families of Legacy High School and other schools in the area. One declaration of the Black Panthers' Ten-Point Program<sup>21</sup> is focused on food, housing, land, and education, justice, and peace being available to Black people. To reflect this, one of the most notable BPP initiatives is the Free Breakfast for School Children Program that they established in 1969 to provide hot breakfast for school children at local churches before they went to school (The Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation, 2010). Families from Legacy's community participated in and benefited from this program.

There is limited documentation of direct actions of the Black Panther Party at Legacy High School. However, in a 2014 media spotlight on the youth leadership coordinator at Legacy High School's youth center, the coordinator called Legacy a "Black Panther School" and its

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<sup>21</sup> The Black Panther Party's Ten-Point Program has been likened to a combination of the Bill of Rights and the Declaration of Independence (Anderson, 2012). The Ten-Point Program is a list of ideals that members of the Black Panther Party actively lived by and practiced daily.

community a “Panther neighborhood.” Additionally, in a 2012 district publication, one of the “surprising facts” listed about Legacy High School is that Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali both spoke at an event sponsored by the Afro-American Association at Legacy High School. It has also been noted that the Black Panther Party’s co-founder Huey P. Long attended this event. The history of Legacy High School was very much influenced by the Black Panther Party. In fact, during the time of on-site data collection for this study, the Black Panthers’ Ten-Point Program was printed and adorned various spaces within Legacy High School. This is indicative of the continued influence of the Black Panther Party in the community and school. Additionally one member of the original Black Panther Party continues to be involved in social development efforts of the school and community.

### **Legacy’s Organizational Changes**

Over time, as the school district and schools’ administrative leadership have attempted to address the academic and social needs of the school, many organizational, leadership, and programmatic changes have taken place. These changes in organizational structure mark transitional milestones in the identity of Legacy High School. The timeline below (Figure 4.1) is a condensed outline of the school’s organizational changes over time, and offers insight into how these changes impacted the school’s identity and culture.

**Table 4.1 Legacy High School Organizational Timeline**

<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Organizational Change/Reform</b>	<b>Rationale and Outcome</b>
<b>Early History (1915-Late 1990s)</b>	<i>Legacy High as a comprehensive high school.</i>	<p>After being established as a small vocational summer school, Legacy underwent both construction and curriculum changes over the years, eventually developing into a comprehensive high school.</p> <p>Given the demographic nature of the surrounding Legacy community, Legacy High School became a center of racial and political social movement.</p> <p>Throughout the years, Legacy became a monumental element of the community's identity, heritage, and history.</p>
<b>Late 1990s- Early 2000s</b>	<i>Afrocentric education reform</i>	<p>In response to the social conditions of the community and how these conditions impacted the lives of students, Legacy began utilizing an Afrocentric based curriculum and cultural reform to teach students about their history in ways that a traditional curriculum did not.</p> <p>This alternative curriculum was implemented to serve as a theoretical framework for Black students to understand their ethnic history as well as how their place in the educational system is influenced by harsh social and systematic structures that are in place to stratify society.</p> <p>A nationally renowned researcher (Undisclosed Author 2, 2000) studied the Afrocentric curriculum implementation at Legacy and asserted that this curriculum alternative was indeed a positive effort to teach students about society because youth lives are shaped by "complex systems of control and containment" (p. 17). While this redesigned school focus and culture did allow a place for students to maintain cultural identity, it is argued that it failed to fully meet the needs of students because there were no structures in place to systematically improve the social ails that students face.</p> <p>Despite the efforts, neither the school nor district improved academic quality for students.</p>

**Table 4.1 (Cont.)**

<b>2005</b>	<i>Legacy High School opens school-based health clinic. (The first time Legacy is identified as a FSCS)</i>	<p>In an effort to mitigate the desperate mental and physical health conditions that Legacy students faced, Legacy partnered with the local children's hospital to open a school-based health clinic.</p> <p>The clinic was intended to serve Legacy students and their siblings, as well as area residents up to 24 years old.</p> <p>According to one of the school's community partners and sponsors, prior to the health clinic nearly 40% of Legacy High School students were teenage parents.</p> <p>According to research participants of this study, the health clinic was accepted by both the school and community but was not initially well integrated into the fabric of the school.</p> <p>Even today, there remains a weak collaboration between the school health clinic and the larger community.</p> <p>Although not initially identified by the school district as such, the opening of the school-based health clinic marks the start of Legacy's recognition as a full-service community school..</p>
<b>2005-2010</b>	<i>Legacy dismantled into three small schools.</i>	During the early 2000s, schools and districts across the country began organizing small high schools (less than 600 students) as a reform effort intended to increase high school matriculation and graduation rates.
<b>2010</b>	<i>Legacy reorganized into one comprehensive high school.</i>	As funding for the small schools movement dissipated, coupled with Legacy High School stakeholders' push to return to the "Old Legacy," the school eventually closed the small schools and reorganized into one school.
<b>2010-Present</b>	"Legacy is Back"	Since the school's return to one comprehensive high school, Legacy High School, has been working to reestablish some of the identity of the "Old Legacy" (prior to separating into small schools) while also considering the shifts in social context and educational needs to move forward as a school.

As illustrated in the timeline above, Legacy High School has experienced many organizational changes. Through discussions with research participants and reviewing archived



Board of Education meeting minutes and presentations, it was found that many of the organizational changes were top-down decisions. Very few, if any, of these organizational decisions were vetted by the school community, nor was the school community given the opportunity to say if the decided organizational solutions were adequately aligned with their specific needs as a school or their desires. These changes, and their implementation, impacted the school's ability to establish a full identity and develop a system that worked well for their community.

In the 1990's, the school district considered closing the doors of Legacy High School due to high rates of violence and suspension and continued low rates of enrollment and academic performance (Undisclosed Author 2, 2000). According to the [State] Department of Education, in 1999 Legacy High School had an API (Academic Performance Index) score of 386. This score ranks at a #1, the lowest ranking, on the API scale ([State] Department of Education). At one point, it was estimated that 30 to 40% of the students at the high school were teenage parents (Undisclosed Author 2, 2000).

**Legacy High School becomes a full-service community school.** In 2005, through partnership with the county's department of health and the local children's hospital, Legacy High School opened its own health clinic on campus that provides physical and mental health services to its students, alumni, and the region's community members. Since then, Legacy has opened a youth and family center on campus and provides dental and vision screenings, after-school programs, meals for students, tutoring, and a host of other academic and non-academic resources for students and parents. Not only are these services available for students and their families to use, but also the students of the school were integral parts in the design, implementation, and functioning of these school services. Legacy's identity as a full-service community school first

came about when the school opened the health-based clinic. When I traced the school's conception of the health clinic, I concluded that there was never an initiative by school or district officials that distinctly set out to reconfigure the school into a full-service learning and community space; instead, its development reportedly started from a wrong turn.

**Legacy opens the first campus based health clinic in its school district.** The story of how Legacy High School began its evolution into a full-service community school is almost novelistic in nature. Newspaper articles report that “Mr. B”<sup>22</sup>, the brainchild behind the opening of the health clinic made a wrong turn while driving to his mother's memorial service and stumbled across Legacy High School. When he got to the front of the school, what he saw was “a kid smoking a ‘blunt’ right on the steps of the school” that was surrounded by a high fence, and in a neighborhood that the news reporter describes as “sketchy” (Undisclosed , , 2005). “A week later he showed up at the school with a resume and a head full of dreams about what the school could become” (Undisclosed Author 5, 2005, n.p.). Mr. B eventually got a job at the school helping students address and cope with crisis, stress, trauma, and mental illness<sup>23</sup> in the school's counseling center (Undisclosed Author 6, 2005). Once a member of the school staff, his concern about the hardships that he had seen during his serendipitous first encounter with Legacy was only intensified.

After a student confided in Mr. B that a family member had raped her, he immediately attempted to call seven doctors to get her the proper medical care. After seven unanswered phone calls, he finally reached someone who was able to be a resource to the young girl (Undisclosed Author 7, 2005). It was Mr. B's answered call by a leading physician of the local children's

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<sup>22</sup> The name has been shortened to protect the anonymity of the research site and participants.

<sup>23</sup> His role at the school varies based on source. One news article listed him as being a state- paid crisis therapist. Another source sites him as being a drop-out prevention counselor.

hospital that led to a friendship and professional partnership that would soon change the way Legacy High School served its students. Together, these two realized that in order for students to be successful in school, they had to have access to both physical and mental health services, regardless of their ability to pay. Mr. B noted to one news source that, “school failure is a public health epidemic” (Undisclosed Author 9, 2015). It was realized that students at Legacy High School, and other youth in the area, experienced a myriad of physical and mental health traumas such as gang violence, adolescent pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, exposure to death, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder at alarming rates.

Realizing the critical needs of students, Mr. B and his partner from the children’s hospital acquired the support of local state and private agencies to create a campus-based health clinic that aimed at meeting both the physical and mental needs of Legacy High School students. In one news article published in the early stages of the clinic, Legacy students discussed the hardships and peer pressure that were by-products of growing up in their neighborhood and attributed these harsh realities to their need for the clinic on campus (Undisclosed Author, 9). The Legacy campus health clinic provides services not only to Legacy students but also to adolescent residents, up to age 24, at little or no cost. The Legacy High School campus-based health clinic was the first of its kind in the city’s public school district. Since it opened in 2005, the school district has recognized how invaluable it is having on-site health resources available to youth and has opened 14 additional clinics on school campuses.

Campus-based health services, clinics, and centers are not the sole element of a full-service community school—however, they are large and important parts. According to the Coalition for Community Schools (2014), community schools have integrated focuses on academics, health, and social services that are all addressed through partnerships between the

school and community resources. Legacy High School not only provides mental and physical health services but also has continued to create a community partnership base since 2005 that allows them to provide other academic, personal and professional development, and social supports to students, their families, and community members<sup>24</sup>.

Just months after Legacy High School opened the doors of its on-campus health clinic, the high school that was known for decades as Legacy closed and reopened as three small schools. Because of this sudden organizational restructuring, the health clinic did not have the opportunity to become an integrated part of the campus' identity, although it remained an important campus element and asset. When I asked staff members and alumni who were present when the health clinic opened about what happened to the clinic once the school split into small schools, they described to me that people knew it was there, and some people used it, but that its presence was not as grand of a statement as the media portrayed it. In fact, one of the school's mental health clinicians, who also teaches at the school and is a Legacy alumna explained that the opening of the clinic caused some contention within the community because there was already a health clinic in the region that was founded by four African American community residents. The community was disappointed that instead of the school partnering with the local health clinic that already served many of the community's families, they partnered with the large city hospital, thus creating business competition for a local Black-owned business.

### **The Small Schools Movement**

The late 1990s and early 2000s brought a shift in the way the United States began to address the issue of poor student outcomes in school. One approach to tackle this issue was the

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<sup>24</sup> These services will be explained in more detail in chapter 6.

Small Schools Initiative<sup>25</sup>. Education reformers and philanthropists pushed small autonomous schools as the answer to closing the achievement gap. Research notes that small schools create more meaningful learning environments (Toch, 2003) and are positively correlated to closing the achievement gap (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Wasley & Lear, 2001). Particularly for high school outcomes, smaller schools are said to produce lower dropout rates, decrease occurrences of violence and disruption, and instill in students a higher sense of self-awareness and self-esteem (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Thus, in an effort to provide different opportunities and receive different outcomes than those of traditionally larger schools, many school districts in states such as New York, Pennsylvania, and California subscribed to the small schools movement. Additionally, in 2000 the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation made philanthropic investments to catalyze the small schools movement and provided financial support to schools and districts that took on this reform challenge (Vander Ark, 2002). Legacy High School is in one of the districts that participated in the small schools movement. As a result, in 2005 Legacy transformed from one large high school of nearly 800 students to three small schools (two high schools and one middle school).

The dismantling of Legacy High School into three small schools was a major turning point in the school's history and identity. Given the close-knit communal bonds within the Legacy school community, many current and former teachers, students, and community members felt like this was a top-down decision made to tear apart the school's social and cultural fabric and was not strategically thought out. In fact, one alum from the 1980s, who has worked with the school for 30 years, described the small schools transformation as follows:

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<sup>25</sup> The education reform initiative that pushed for small schools that were less than 400, but ideally no more than 200, students. These schools would be autonomous and typically offer students specialized curriculums that served as a theme of the school.

*... it did a disservice by having middle school students on campus with high school students. The district would say "They wouldn't cross each other." [But that was] not true at all... I wasn't really for that. I think that happened during a time where Bill Gates poured some money back east again or up north, experimenting from my observations. He's like, "Let's throw this money down here and split these schools up and see how it works. Let's bring little kids up here with high school students." Two high schools in the same building. That split the school...totally split the school. Now you've got the SHINE students and ELITE<sup>26</sup> students not getting along. It got to that point. It was never a conversation about Legacy. It was something around Legacy's educational complex...Kids wanted Legacy on their diploma. Instead, they was getting SHINE and ELITE on their high school diploma. No one recognizes that. Nobody knew what that was. I still don't know what it means. It was an acronym for something. It didn't last long...*

Similarly, many of the other older alumni, either in interviews or in informal discussions, discussed the split as having a negative impact on the Legacy culture and climate. The same alum and current staff member quoted above later stated in his interview [regarding the split's impact on the school's culture and climate]:

*Oh it destroyed it... it destroyed it because it affected the enrollment drastically. Now from that, we are still reaping some of that<sup>27</sup>. We've been trying to build it back up since 2010. We used to claim, "Legacy is back", because the community and alumni fought to*

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<sup>26</sup> SHINE and ELITE are pseudonyms that have been used in place of the actual names of the two high schools that resulted in the split of Legacy.

<sup>27</sup> Since the school's split and returning to one large high school, the school has continued to suffer from low enrollment.

*make that happen. We said, "This split school is not cool. We want Legacy back! We want Legacy back! We want one school!"*

This interview quote is representative of how many Legacy alumni from the 1960s to the 1980s felt about the impact of the school being split into three small schools. During my time on the school's campus (research site), I observed alumni from this generational range describe the school's split as removing the deep-rooted culture that shapes the school's historical identity. Even almost 10 years later, alumni and community members still discuss how the school's split has negatively impacted the school's identity.

However, one former student who attended SHINE from 2005 to 2009 did not necessarily feel that the school's split tarnished the original identity and social fabric of Legacy. Instead, he discussed it in a way that showed there was no real identity established in the new schools. According to this participant, it was as if the new schools loomed in the shadow of the original Legacy High School. In fact, when I first met this participant, he introduced himself to me as an alumnus of Legacy, but given the timeframe in which he was a high school student it was evident that he was at Legacy during the split. When I asked him to clarify his high school affiliation and whether he considers himself a Legacy alum, he replied:

*Most definitely. I was under that structure, SHINE and ELITE, but I never looked at it as "Oh, I go to SHINE"... we understand that we went to a broken up school, SHINE and ELITE, but no one refers to it automatically like "I'm from SHINE." But it's always Legacy. Legacy family. It's just what it is. They can do whatever to the core of the schools and call it whatever and split it up, [but] as long as we go to Legacy... everybody's going to say that. I feel that they graduated from Legacy or they went to Legacy. It's just a*

*funny way of looking at it. On my diploma, it says “SHINE High School, Legacy Educational Complex”, but I just consider that I went to Legacy. It’s the same thing.*

These interview excerpts related to Legacy High School’s split into three small schools during the small schools movement shed light on a significant point in the school’s history. While some tell this story of the split as a dismantling of the school’s identity, others say that it did not break the social fabric of Legacy but neither did it leave room for these three schools to gain their own identities. However, regardless how the small schools split is described, it is evident that this period in the school’s organizational structure impacted Legacy affiliates’ trust in the rationale and intention for organizational changes that are proposed for the school.

Discussions with Legacy alumni and faculty that were present when the school split revealed that, just as in the 1950s and 1960s, there was distrust created by the school district due to a lack of transparency in intended policy changes for the school. Many attribute some of the tensions and distrust between the Legacy school community and district administration that still exists today to being rooted in the lack of transparency that happened during the small schools shift nearly two decades ago. In fact, one of the school’s current social workers, who is a Legacy alum from the 1980s who was born and raised in the city and has been involved with or employed by the school in some capacity over the past 30 years, stated in an interview with me:

*I was here when the district decided to choose a couple of parents to start going around, looking at other schools—the small school model, and I sat in every meeting about that, and they never really said we were going to become a small school. They just wanted us to see. The community was against it, but the district made it happen anyway.*



To better understand the nature of this finding, I reviewed the district’s publically archived school board meeting minutes that captured the decision-making process to split Legacy High School into three small schools.

**Legacy is dismantled into three small schools.** On February 9, 2005, a presentation was made to the school board on the interventions designed for schools that were in Program Improvement (PI)<sup>28</sup> entitled “School Interventions—Phase II: Schools in Program Improvement Year 4, Mandated Interventions under NCLB.” The stated goal for this presentation was to describe the process through which the district was restructuring schools that were in the fourth year of Program Improvement. On slide 6 of this presentation the “Options by law<sup>29</sup> for restructuring schools in PI Year 4” were presented. These options are as follows:

1. Reopen as a public charter school.
2. Contract with an entity, e.g., a private management company with a record of effectiveness, to operate the public school.
3. Turn school operation over to State educational agency, if permitted under State law and agreed to by State.
4. Replace all or most of school staff (may include principal) relevant to failure to make adequate yearly progress.
5. Any other major restructuring of school’s governance that makes fundamental reforms to improve student academic achievement that has substantial promise of enabling school to make adequate yearly progress.

This slide also highlights that “internal options (4 and 5) were considered before any external options (1-3).” According to this presentation on proposed interventions, there were 13 schools

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<sup>28</sup> All Title I funded schools and local education programs that do not make Adequately Yearly Progress (AYP) are identified for Program Improvement (PI) under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). California Department of Education, Retrieved on February 5, 2015, from <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ti/programimprov.asp>

<sup>29</sup> Given the wording of this slide title, it is unclear whether these options are based solely on requirements by federal mandate or whether these options were the created by-laws by district officials.

in the school district that required mandated interventions as a result of their status in Program Improvement—Legacy High School was not one of these schools.

Based on this presentation, the preferred option to meet the needs of the schools that were in Program Improvement was “New School Creation”. In this presentation, new school creation was defined as “a local restructuring option that creates a new school that is not in Program Improvement” (slide 11). Of the 13 schools in the district that required mandated interventions, 10 schools within the district were considered for the new school creation option; again, Legacy High School was not on this list. Additionally, in the school board meeting minutes from February 9, 2005, in the presentation report on the “Response to District’s Request for Letters of Interest in Restructuring Schools Under Program Improvement Year Four Sanctions,” it was noted that “...[Legacy] would have been in P.I. Year 2, but because of changes made, none of them are under sanction.” This information, from both the presentation to the school board and the school board meeting minutes, indicates that as of February 9, 2005, Legacy High School was not being considered for closure and reopening into three small schools. However, in August 2005—just six months later—the Legacy High School that its community had grown to love and cherish was closed and reopened as two small, interconnected, yet autonomous high schools and a middle school.

After the initial February 9, 2005 presentation, discussion of Legacy High School was not noted in school board meetings again until March 30, 2005, according to archived public board meeting minutes. On March 30, 2005, it was reported that Legacy High School was listed as a school that needed corrective actions. Strategies were presented, but school restructuring and closure were not mentioned. However, in the May 25, 2005 school board minutes, under the heading “New Small Schools—Creation School Year 2005-2006”, SHINE and ELITE were

listed as “two New Small Interconnected Schools that were part of [Legacy] High School” that were approved by the state administrator. These May 25, 2005 school board meeting minutes provide the first available documentation of Legacy High School transforming into three small schools as part of the small schools movement. Although there may have been internal administrative dialogue regarding the transition, in present-day conversations about the “school split” many older Legacy alumni and faculty say it was not a transparent decision, and attribute much of the current distrust and contention between the school community and school district to this instance.

The small schools movement was a school reform effort that many education reformers and leaders across the country bought into as the answer to closing the achievement gap. However, many critics of the movement, particularly in the district that runs Legacy High School, considered the movement as nothing more than a focus on “structural and organizational changes, rather than more deeply rooted educational challenges” (Undisclosed Author 8, 2009). Eventually, due to limited funding to sustain the nearly 40 schools that were opened during the small schools movement and declining enrollment the school district had to close many of its small schools. In large part due to the activism and community organizing of Legacy High School’s interested stakeholders, in 2010, the two small high schools that occupied the campus were closed and Legacy High School was reestablished as one comprehensive high school<sup>30</sup>.

#### **“Legacy is Back: 2010”**

“Legacy is back” is the slogan that was used by many Legacy alumni, faculty and staff, and community members to express their excitement and approval of the fact that Legacy High School was no longer three small schools and in 2010 was reestablished into the one school that they knew and identified with. However, although Legacy is indeed back, the school still

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<sup>30</sup> The middle school that also occupied the campus was closed in 2007 due to low enrollment.

continues to suffer from some of the ramifications of the small school split. For instance, for the five academic years prior to the school being split into small schools, the average yearly student enrollment was 746 students. However, since 2010 and the reestablishment of Legacy as a single high school, student enrollment has not reached 300 students per year. While the school leadership has embraced the low enrollment as an element that lends to a more close-knit and family-oriented school culture, the steady low enrollment has also made the school vulnerable to a smaller budget and increased fears (more so by alumni) of the school being closed.

As district and school leadership continue to work to make Legacy High School a choice school, there is a contentious effort between those alumni and community members who want the “old” Legacy High School back and those current Legacy affiliates who seek to make Legacy High School a school of the 21st century. While the school’s history that is rooted in both community and cultural pride remains an integral part of the school’s identity and legacy, some seasoned alumni and community members, reflecting on the school that Legacy once was in the 1960s through 1980s, do not fully recognize the need for growth and maturation of the school’s curriculum and social foci. For example, in recent meetings that have taken place around school transformation, some “Old Legacy” advocates are nostalgic for the time when Legacy offered woodshop and home economic courses and want to see those brought back. However, their being nostalgic of the past does not mean they can see how the school must move forward to evolve and meet the needs of today’s students.

### **Legacy High School Today**

Today, Legacy High School remains the only traditional high school in its small, working-class community, and it has an identity that is still deeply rooted in Black pride, culture, and community. The school serves less than 300 students. During the 2013-2014<sup>31</sup> school year,

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<sup>31</sup> During the time of this writing the data reports for the 2014-2015 school year are not yet available.

state school data reported that 88.7% of the student population was Black or African American, 5.1% was Hispanic or Latino, 1.8% was White, 1.1% identified as two or more races, and all other racial groups reported at less than 1%. During the same school year, of the 275 students, 237 or 86.2% were eligible for free or reduced meal prices; this is more than 10% of the district-level eligibility.

Many of the students who enter the school doors of Legacy High School do so while bringing with them the unfair disadvantages of living through poverty and gang violence in an underserved community. Many students deal with challenges such as health ailments, unstable living environments, and high exposure to crime and death. All of these realities limit their ability to fully engage in the learning process once they arrive at school. One piece of data that the school district uses to assess the ways in which the community surrounding each school impacts the learning that takes place is through the Z-score. A school's Z-score is based on an assessment of a variety of environmental factors such as the school's proximity to grocery stores and vacant lots, as well as crime rates and average household income. The school's Z-score and the assessment tool are not publically available, but it is important to note that Legacy's Z-score places them in a range with a high level of negative environmental impact. This area of the city has been described as one of the city's most underserved communities.

The Legacy High School campus is nestled in the middle of a residential community. Each side of the school is lined with rows of mostly single-family homes that belong to both families that have been there for generations as well as those neighbors who are new to the area. Unfortunately, due to the prime location of the neighboring commercial, financial, and tourist city, some families are being pushed out of their homes and community as gentrification continues to increase the cost of living beyond what is reasonably affordable for working-class

families. Unfortunately, despite increased desirability of living in the area due to its proximity to the surrounding economic hubs, the immediate area surrounding Legacy High School still lacks many of the resources needed to classify it as a thriving neighborhood for its residents that do not have access to the resources outside of their immediate community. Therefore, even many of the improvements that are being made to the community near the school's campus are not intended to serve the families that have generational roots in the area. As Legacy High School continues to work toward transforming its identity into one that defies the negative stereotypes and stigmas that have been associated with the school for decades, and into one that highlights the academic and community service potential of its student body, the school staff and students aim to make Legacy a resource to serve and empower their historical community.

### **Summary**

Understandably, the Legacy school community suffers from residual hurt and feelings of distrust from decades of impressions that decisions are being made for and to them instead of by or with them. Despite the economic and social difficulty that the school community has faced, Legacy High School has remained an integral part of the city's identity and history. Because of the vested interest and commitment to the school and its robust position in the city's history, community involvement and advocacy on behalf of the school have been an integral part of the school's continued growth. The current vision of Legacy High School is to be a transformative learning environment for both students and educators in a school climate that simultaneously supports individuality while promoting and demanding respect for others and the community. Many faculty and staff at Legacy High School recognize that in order for the school community to reach its highest potential, its focus cannot simply be on academics. They recognize that in order to help students reach their highest academic potential they must first address many issues

that are rooted in the realities of Legacy students and the community. The efforts of the faculty, staff, and supporters of Legacy High School seek to address, combat, and counter these issues.

The realities that influence Legacy High School's identity and organizational functioning as a school environment, as well as how students and their families experience Legacy, will be discussed throughout the next chapter. It should be noted that the themes of this dissertation are not directly reflective of the full-service community school model at Legacy High School, but more so representative of the recurring social patterns that take place within the school community. The common themes that arose throughout the data collection of this dissertation were used to explore the study's research questions. The thematic patterns represent how students, parents, faculty and staff, and alumni of the Legacy High School community experience the school and were used to shed light on how Legacy High School's functioning as a full-service community school is represented by various aspects of school and community life.

## **Chapter 5| Journeying Through “The Village”: Ethnographic Research Findings**

My research findings encompass a plethora of information and have led to both a very novice understanding of the full-service community school model and first-hand knowledge of Legacy High School on a fairly intimate level. My study was originally designed to gain an understanding of how Legacy’s functioning as a full-service community school influenced various aspects of student life, school culture, and practices. However, due to the intimate relational nature of ethnographic research, my findings were much more complex than originally hypothesized. While I did indeed learn about the full-service community school attributes that were reflected in the practices and organizational functioning of Legacy High School, what I mostly learned about was the everyday experiences faced by Legacy students, faculty and staff, and parents. Initially I questioned if these findings were the best way to address the research questions, but I quickly realized that these findings were in fact a necessary element to fully inform the study. This value will be further discussed in the final chapter.

The findings shared throughout this chapter will serve as a roadmap of the themes identified during data collection and analysis. Ultimately, this chapter will tell the story of Legacy High School and lend to understanding how the school’s functioning as a full-service community school contributes to various aspects of students’ lives, the school’s culture and climate, and school–community relations. Examining these themes in relation to the full-service community school attributes within Legacy High School lends to addressing this study’s research questions.

Throughout the data analysis process, approximately 10 thematic patterns<sup>32</sup> were revealed. Each of these themes was identified through thematic coding of interview data, field observations, document review, and anecdotal data gathered within the research setting. However, many of the themes were interconnected, and therefore have been combined into

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<sup>32</sup> Similar themes were grouped and discussed together.



themes and subthemes for discussion within this chapter. The six major themes that were revealed through data collection:

1. The “Legacy Fam”
2. Students’ experiences of trauma
3. Generational affiliations within Legacy
4. Community influence and engagement
5. The importance of interpersonal relationships
6. Outsider perception of Legacy High School

Prior to sitting with and officially coding the gathered data, there were a few reoccurring themes that were very apparent: Trauma, “Legacy Family”, and the support system that serves as part of the strength of Legacy. These themes and phrases almost always came up in interviews and conversations and were apparent in the observations that I recorded. Recognizing these primary themes further aided in understanding much of what took place at Legacy High School.

### **Who and What Is Legacy High School?**

On the surface, Legacy resembles any other urban comprehensive high school. Covering a full square block, nestled in the middle of a residential neighborhood, sits a massive building painted with stale tan paint and chocolate brown trimmed doors and windows. However, once you step inside you begin to see what Legacy High School really is. In the foyer, the walls are covered with vibrantly painted images of Black ancestors—the same way family portraits might adorn the walls in a home. As you walk, you can almost feel the piercing eyes of Rosa Parks, Malcolm X, Frederick Douglass, and other historical pioneers looking to you with an expectant eye to continue the legacy. Trophy cases display the accomplishments of some of the country’s most well-renowned athletes who trained and played on the very field Legacy students use now.

Quotes, college flags, and artwork are on display, illustrating the norms that shape the culture of the school.

During class time—for the most part—the hallways are quiet. Walking up the stairs to the second floor, you may hear the thumping of drums coming from the music class. In the middle of the hall, you will hear remnants of teachers’ lessons spilling out of their classrooms; on the far end, you might even see a teacher negotiating with a student to go back to class after they decided to walk out in defiance. But it is when the bell rings that you *see, hear, and feel the loudness of Legacy erupting*.

Among the chaos that is common when there are 200 high school students responding to the signal of the three minutes of freedom they have during passing time are unfinished conversations between friends, conflicts between enemies (even if they were friends just days ago), and tough-love conversations between adults and students. While adults are shuffling students into their next class, some students are griping about why they would rather not go. In some cases, they don’t. When you walk into the halls of Legacy, it is like walking into a family home. Just as often as there is order, there is chaos. At the same time academic lessons are being taught, relationships are being built. Even when there are times that there has to be hard discipline, there is love. Legacy is a school, but more than that Legacy is a family.

### **Thematic Patterns**

#### **Theme 1: “Legacy Fam”**

One of the first things that was most apparent about Legacy High School was that Legacy was more than a school—it was a family. When teachers, students, and parents talked about Legacy, they spoke about the close-knit relationships that create the culture and set the climate of the school. When I asked the interview questions “what makes Legacy uniquely special to you” and “what do you think makes Legacy different from other schools,” many participants

mentioned the school's small student population and the close-knit relationships between faculty, staff, students, and other members of the school community. In fact, many referred to Legacy as a family. When I asked Jared, a graduating senior, if there was anything that made Legacy uniquely special to him, he told me:

*... when we say Legacy family, we really mean Legacy family. We've always got each other's back. Even though we're not the biggest school, we'll be known, not like show-out, but we'll be known because we have Legacy pride, probably the most pride—more than any other school in [the city], maybe even [the state]! We really do. That's what I love about Legacy. Even like the alumni—they even come back and help. The Legacy family stays forever.... At Legacy, like every high school has cliques, so there are cliques here, but when we really do need each other, we come together.*

Jared's quote accurately describes what I gathered early on from being at Legacy. Like Jared, many participants from all of the varying participant groups recognized the familial presence of the school and referred to their pride in being a part of the "Legacy Fam." For me, walking through the doors of Legacy High School was like walking through the doors of "Big Mama's house"<sup>33</sup>. By no means was this school perfect. Even in its imperfections (i.e., some students performing below grade level, high rates of discipline issues, high teacher turnover while already being short staffed, and having all of these things encapsulated in high rates of trauma), positivity and progress—albeit in ways that are not traditionally assessed—were happening in this school. One teacher, "Brooks," described the school's family dynamic to me in this way:

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<sup>33</sup> Big Mama's house" is a reference to the 1997 Fox 2000 Pictures dramatic comedy film *Soul Food*. The film follows the story of a close-knit African American family who comes together every Sunday at Big Mama's (the family matriarch) house to share family dinner. Throughout the story, the family's trials and tribulations are revealed and life's dysfunction threatens the cohesiveness of the family unit. However, despite the family's struggles, love keeps them together.

*Brooks: Something that I think makes Legacy so unique is that we say, "Legacy Family," but literally...*

*CDA<sup>34</sup>: It feels like a family?*

*Brooks: Yeah, and there are some people who you hate in your family, but you still have to see them at Christmas, right? Well, it's the same thing here, but it's still a family. You know all the shortcomings and the positives of every person in this building, students and faculty alike. Everybody is, for the most part, working on the same goal.*

Ms. Brooks' quote above highlights the fact that like in families, everyone in Legacy might not get along all the time, but everyone is working on the same goal. Legacy's family dynamic is more than just a unique aspect of the school's culture and identity—it is a part of how student learning and development are encouraged and supported.

**“Being messily involved”.** During an interview, one of the school's math teachers, Mr. Bolar, explained to me what the close-knit nature, care, and concern that are common at Legacy look like. He said:

*...being messily involved in other people's lives... You're so involved that when something happens in their lives, you have to pay attention. That being said, when something happens in a student's life, and all teachers are sent an email saying, "This person is going through some hardships. Let's figure out some ways to modify their assignments," or "let's figure out a way to support them for these next couple of weeks, because they're going to be difficult." Or, "this person's going to a funeral, let's make sure we're*

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<sup>34</sup> I am identified as CDA in quoted dialogues.

*supporting them through that." It's like, all of those life things...when you actually pay attention and respond to those.*

This type of “messy” involvement at Legacy is a cultural norm. Most of the adults at Legacy recognize that their students experience hardship at rates that are uncommon to many youth. In order to serve the students in a more holistic way, the nurturing that takes place at Legacy often exudes characteristics that have resemblance of familial kinship bonds rather than those of an educator and student.

During my time at Legacy, I witnessed many examples of the adults becoming messily involved in the students’ lives to better connect with them so they could fully serve. In fact, there were times when I, myself, became messily involved. Because I became a fixed daily presence on the school’s campus, I too began to form personal relationships with the students. Students (as well as the staff in the school) became comfortable with my presence and came to see me as someone they could trust; at times they sought me out for advice and assistance. Even the administration, faculty, and staff began to view me as an extended part of the staff—I too became part of the Legacy Family. But even my involvement in the short time I was on campus does not compare to the bonds that I witnessed that form the familial social structure of the school. More specifically, there is a unique way that adults—faculty, staff, parents, and teachers—foster intimate familial relationships with students.

***The school leader.*** Legacy High School’s principal, Mrs. Randall, has two biological children of her own. However, when you include the more than 200 students that she nurtures at Legacy, her role as a mother covers a multitude. As a school leader, she works daily to instill academic excellence in her students, but she understands that learning cannot take place if

students have distractions coming from home and the community that interfere with their ability to fully engage in school. Even though she spends a significant portion of her time addressing student behavioral issues, she recognizes that behind every action is a deeper meaning and rationale. So even while she works to correct a student's behavior, she works even harder to address the root of the problem. One example of this was when there was a young female student who was being disruptive and not following the teacher's directions in class. When Mrs. Randall talked to the student to address her behavior, the student explained to her all of the issues that were bothering her. The student explained that her mother and grandmother had an argument the night before, and although she usually tunes it out with music, her cellphone was broken and she was not able to listen to her music. So not only was this young girl emotionally suffering from issues at home, but her usual recourse was unavailable to her. Now, while cellphones and headphones are usually not allowed during school, for that day, Mrs. Randall provided the student with a music player so she would be able to listen to her music. After that, there were no more issues between that student and her teachers during that day. Additionally, Mrs. Randall took the girl's cellphone from her and brought it back to her a few days later after having it repaired. While the original encounter between the student and principal was one involving discipline, once the principal took the time to understand the situation on a deeper level, the student's emotional need was met, which ultimately positively impacted her behavioral reaction and ability to engage in school that day.

One staff member at the school shared another example of Mrs. Randall's care and commitment to her students that exceeds her technical role as a principal:

*Mrs. Randall goes in the morning to the store to push kids to class so they won't be late. Mrs.*

*Randall goes down the street to the drug house to tell them to stop selling dope or selling*

*weed to the kids, and [she pushes] kids to school. You know what I'm saying? She doesn't get paid extra money to do that—that's not in her job description. But for the people who are successful here, they love this school and they love these kids.*

These are only a couple of the many examples of Mrs. Randall's commitment to her students, demonstrating how her role at the school extends beyond a traditional educator with a limited focus on academics to one who is focused on whole-child development.

***The teachers and staff.*** The non-traditional familial relationship element of the school's social fabric is not a characteristic that is limited to the school principal. At Legacy it is common for teachers, faculty, staff, and other members of the school's community to establish relational connections with students that allow them to serve students in more meaningful ways. At Legacy it is common to hear students refer to adults at the school as the "auntie" or "cousin." These casual and personal terms are not used to minimize respect but are exchanged as terms of endearment.

For example, when I asked Ms. Jazz, who is one of the school's longest-serving teachers (being there six years), to tell me about the various roles she plays at Legacy, she candidly shared the following with me:

*So I prepare lessons, but I also counsel, provide for, take care of, nurture, all of the above, is what my job entails... Because we have that relationship. Mine is probably not the most professional, because I treat them all like they're my kids. And sometimes when I reflect on it, you know [pause] but it's what works for me, and I gotta be me so... And my kids know that I care about them... And it's not just my kids, it's all the kids out here at Legacy, they know if you're hungry, come in and I'm gon feed you. They know if you cuttin' up, I'mma*

*jack you up. If you're doing something that is inappropriate, I'm gonna make you apologize... I'm not gonna allow bullying at all. That kind of stuff is what I enforce, so that's my work style. My kids know that I love them. And I think, that's part of probably why God has allowed me to still be here, because he's instilled in me who I am and my kids know that I've got your back, I'm not gonna let you walk over me. And, I do love you, I genuinely do.*

At Legacy it is not uncommon to hear students refer to adults at the school as the “auntie” or “cousin”. Now while in many cases students are biologically (or through long-term relationship) related to some of the faculty and staff at Legacy, in many other cases, these familial titles are used to illustrate how elements of care and nurturing are common in the school environment and relationships have turned those traditionally seen in schools to those that resemble a family.

**Legacy is a safe-haven.** For many, family is whom we turn to for comfort and safety. When there is a positive relationship dynamic between family members, we can be our authentic selves without feeling the need to pretend to be something or someone we are not to fit in. For some students, Legacy is a safe haven from the harsh realities that they face in the outside world. Many of the adults at Legacy work to deal with the delicacies of students’ realities with love and care. They work to make sure that if their students cannot turn to anyone else for solace, school is the place they can come to. This intentional effort to create a safe space for students to learn and exist was apparent throughout many points during data collection. Two examples of Legacy being a safe haven that were most poignant to me were the school’s ability to influence a decrease in gang activity and students cutting class to “cool off” and returning to school when they were again ready to engage.



***Gang activity.*** During one of the preliminary conversations about Legacy that I had with Regina, an administrator of the after-school program and youth and family center, she told me that gang affiliation by Legacy students was something that at one point was problematic. Even if the students were not members of gangs themselves, some had family members or close friends who were, or they lived in a particular gang territory that exposed them to gang activity and culture by proximity. Because students from Legacy live all across the city, the students were affiliated with different gangs. While crossing the territories or paths of another gang and its members could lead to conflict on the street, it was explained to me that such was not the case once students entered the school building. “Once students arrive at school, gang lines are blurred and disappear,” Regina said.

This fact further piqued my interest in studying the full-service community school model, particularly at Legacy. The ability for a school to serve as a place that blurred and disappeared gang lines spoke to unique characteristics related to the school’s culture and climate. The National Research Council Institute of Medicine (2004) notes that students with low academic achievement are approximately three times more likely to join gangs compared to their higher-achieving counterparts. Additionally, feelings of being unattached or uncommitted to school were strong predictors of gang affiliations (NRCIM, 2004). These statistics imply that, in common cases, gang affiliation indicates a disengagement from school. However, at Legacy, being at school seems to have a reverse effect and leads to disengagement—or rather a decreased or paused engagement—in gang activities.

***“Cooling off”.*** Another way Legacy’s family culture establishes the school as a safe haven is how even when students are overwhelmed by the stresses of the day, they still desire to be present at school, although they might not be able to fully engage that day. One example of

this occurred during one of my first days on the school campus. My field notes contain a summary of this situation:

*As I was walking in the hallway with Natalie, one of the school's support staff members, a female student bursts out of class mumbling words of frustration under her breath. Natalie and I both looked at each other to non-verbally indicate that our conversation must stop to address the situation. Just as the young girl—in frustrated teenage fashion—goes to dart down the stairs Natalie calls out to her, "What's going on? Come here." Not fully coming back up the stairs, but turning to respond to being addressed, the student responds in a huff, "Man...Ms. Natalie, I just...I just can't stand his class [talking about the teacher's class from which she just left]. He's in there yelling, the kids won't shut up. I don't even know what he's talking about. I just can't deal with it." At this point the student begins walking down the stairs again headed towards the door that leads to the back parking lot and courtyard of the school. Natalie, in a supportive tone says, "Wait, we can talk about this..." Before Natalie can finish her offering of discussion and potential mediation to the student, the student begins to open the door. Now, in a more firm tone and demeanor Natalie says, "Don't you walk out of that door!" Before we knew it, already out of the door the student yells back at us, "Man, I gotta go smoke, I can't take this shit right now." The door slams between us and the student, and like a deer standing in headlights, I stood there thinking to myself, "Wait, go smoke? Did she really just leave campus and say that she was going to smoke!?" In the midst of my confusion, Natalie goes and alerts the assistant principal that the student has left building; the A.P. then alerts the security guards and other staff via radio, but by this time the student is long gone.*

While student expressions of frustration and anger like this are not uncommon at Legacy, what was most compelling to me about this situation is that a few hours later, when I entered the office of the assistant principal, I saw the same student sitting in his office. Obviously experiencing the side effects of marijuana, she was significantly calmer than before. When I was able to engage with her in conversation, I asked what was wrong and if she was okay, and she said (this time in a calmer tone), “Man, I just couldn’t take it, it was too much. I just needed to get away and cool off.” After talking to her a bit more in detail about what had happened, I asked her why, after cutting from school, she decided to come back. She responded, “I’m supposed to be at school. I wasn’t *skipping* school—I just needed a break. Besides, I have after-school program later that I gotta go to.”

At this point, the student was in the assistant principal’s office because she was being disciplined for leaving school and being talked to about regarding her smoking of weed. In this case, restorative justice interventions were being used. While one of the consequences was that she could not actually attend her after-school program that day, the fact that she had returned to school and wanted to be there was intriguing to me. In my previous experience, usually when students skipped class or left campus without permission it was likely because they did not want to be at school. However, in this situation, the student actually did desire to be there but just needed “a break to cool off.” In addition to this situation, I noticed that there were other instances of students leaving campus (usually after school) to “smoke”<sup>35</sup> and returning to school shortly after. The fact that they came back to school blew my mind and pushed me to determine what it was about the school’s culture and dynamic that students still wanted to be there even when they were upset and overwhelmed with social stress and pressure. To me, this was

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<sup>35</sup> It should be noted that students leaving campus or smoking weed are not offenses that are taken lightly at Legacy. However, in an effort to minimize suspensions and expulsions, restorative justice practices are used in cases where it is appropriate.

indicative of something deeper taking place within the school. For students, the Legacy family represented a place of safety and solace—one to which they could escape so many other things surrounding them.

Being a part of the “Legacy Family” is not only something that students and staff take pride in, but it is an element of the school’s social culture that influences the academic culture as well—it creates elements of trust, interdependency, and care, and it fosters a positive environment in the school that helps make room for academic and social learning to occur. The work of both Bronfenbrenner and Boocock theorize ways the many layers of social experiences influence student learning and development. While this theme casts light on how students’ life contexts influence their experiences at school, the fact that Legacy’s school culture is developed in a way that creates social bonds and familial relationships shows how interpersonal relationship dynamics in the school setting influence students’ experiences at school just as much as life context. (These factors will be highlighted throughout other themes in this chapter). While the Legacy family culture might in fact function in ways that minimize some of the burdens of social stress and hardship, it does not fully alleviate students from the realities they face.

## **Theme 2: High Rate of Trauma Exposure by Legacy High School Students**

The American Psychological Association defines trauma as “an emotional response to an event like an accident, rape, or natural disaster” (American Psychological Association, 2015). When a person experiences chronic stress that is a residual trigger of the traumatic experience previously faced, they are often diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Simple PTSD is typically associated with a singular incident of trauma (Lanius, Bluhm, & Frewen, 2011). In a 2011 TEDx talk entitled “Growing Roses from Concrete,” renowned educator and scholar Jeff Duncan Andrade reported that “1 in 3 urban youth display the symptoms of mild to

severe symptoms of PTSD”, which he further states is twice the likelihood of veterans who returned from the war in Iraq.

Recognizing the complexity and continuity of the trauma that urban youth who grow up in poverty often face, Andrade argues that PTSD for this group is a misdiagnosis. He argues instead that what these urban youth suffer is complex post-traumatic stress disorder (CPTSD). Unlike the traumatic stress that follows a singular event, complex trauma describes “repeated interpersonal trauma during crucial developmental periods” (Lanius, Bluhm, & Frewen, 2011, p. 332). As an educator of disadvantaged youth of color, Andrade recognizes that the constant exposure to realities such as poverty, crime and violence, homelessness, hunger, and experiences of death among peer groups not only impacts their social development but also impacts how they are able to engage in school (Andrade, 2011). Jeff Duncan Andrade’s contemporary approach to identifying and addressing how the circumstances that take place in the everyday lives of youth impact their development aligns with Urie Bronfenbrenner’s theory about the primary influencers of life.

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1994) theorized that two of the primary influencers of a person’s life are the things that are faced in the micro- and mesosystems of human development. As described in chapter 2, according to Bronfenbrenner’s Ecology of Human Development, the microsystem is pattern[s] of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical, social, and symbolic features that invite, permit, or inhibit engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interaction with, and activity, in the immediate environment. (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 39)

These settings, as described as part of the microsystem, include one's family, peers, school, social, and neighborhood settings. It is how a person interacts with these settings that determines their initial understanding of, and ways of interacting with, the outside world. Additionally, the mesosystem of Bronfenbrenner's Ecology of Human Development model "comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings (microsystems) containing the developing person" (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 40). For example, how a student's interactions with their family at home or peers in their neighborhood influences their experiences and outcomes at school makes up their mesosystem.

In this dissertation study, it was found that as far back as the early 1990s, and likely much further, experiencing chronic trauma is something that many Legacy High School students have in common. Many current Legacy High School students experience a great deal of trauma in their homes, families, and neighborhoods, which influences how they develop as youth and as students. Shauna, a staff member in the school-based health clinic, described the students at Legacy in the following way:

*many of them [have] long histories of both individual and personal community trauma, generations of trauma and historical traumas... Students are walking around with incredible amounts of grief and tragic experiences and [are] showing up to school with that...*

Nearly every (non-student) adult participant—every teacher, many of the administrators, as well as some alumni and parents—whose interview data contributed to the study's findings attributed much of Legacy students' experiences at school to the chronic trauma that they face daily outside of school. Although many of the qualms that people shared about Legacy related to poor academic performance and disciplinary issues (further discussion on this later in the

chapter), people who were truly familiar with Legacy recognized that these factors could not be judged without considering the context within which they arise.

When teachers, faculty, and staff participants were asked to describe the students at Legacy, many mentioned behavioral issues, chronic absences, issues of respect for others and self, etc. However, these factors were almost always understood through the reality that many of students' negative behaviors were often by-products of circumstances beyond their control. Ms. Jazz, who works mostly with some of the highest-need students at Legacy, described many of the students' traumas in the following way:

*A lot of our kids...have gone through some horrible, horrific situations. We talked with one student today who you would not believe the trauma that goes on in his world, you just wouldn't believe it. And so a lot of my kids come to me broken. A lot of my kids come to me extremely angry. A lot of my kids come to me with the inherent disabilities, or of parents with drug backgrounds, a lot of... the kids and their families are not that nuclear family—mom, dad, siblings; a lot of my kids are just fighting for survival on a daily basis. And that's not all of my kids, but that's a chunk, a big chunk of my kids. And I think that's representative of a big chunk of kids at our school.*

Interview conversations revealed high levels of traumatic experiences and desperate conditions among students such as gang activity, recreational drug use, witnessing of violence and death of peers and family members, and having to prematurely bear the burden of responsibilities that are traditionally those of adults, like caring for parents and siblings.

During my 5 months at Legacy High School, there were numerous cases of tragedy that impacted the school climate on a large scale. One of the most notable situations occurred in March of 2015. While sitting in an after-school staff meeting with Legacy staff, we heard

gunshots fired nearby. This is an example of the tragedy that impacted student and staff alike. An excerpt from my field notes are below.

*...the second round. Not sure how many shots—maybe the same amount [as the first round of shots that were heard], but they were closer to school this time. All of the staff in the meeting went to the window. There were students on the field. The principal and teachers were yelling out of the window to direct the students to safety. [One teacher in the meeting] ran downstairs to help usher the students inside. [The Assistant Principal] radioed [another staff member] to get the students off of the athletic field and inside the building. After the second round of shots, we saw a teenage boy run through the school parking lot—he looked as if he was running and hiding. A girl drove through the parking lot and the boy got in her car. [The principal] and other staff members identified the girl who was driving as a former Legacy student. [The principal] immediately called the female student from her cell phone. She told the girl to remain calm, and not say anything to alert her passenger. She explained what we had just witnessed from the window, instructed the girl to get the student out of her car, and go home (Field notes, March 9, 2015).*

The atmosphere at the school the following day was somber. Just two blocks away from the school, two people had been critically injured and one young woman was fatally shot while picking her child up from the daycare nearby. Although none of the people involved in the incident were students, many students were impacted by the death of an innocent neighbor—a young woman many of the students knew. Additionally, the alleged rationale for the shooting was related to territorial gang war. Some students had friends and family members who were



members or affiliated with these gangs. So even when students were not directly involved the residual effects of this experience contributed to the trauma that these high school students face.

The situation recounted above is not an isolated one for Legacy. In 2015, a nonprofit organization funded by the state's Department of Education conducted a survey of Legacy High School students, teachers, and parents. One of the survey questions posed to students asked, "Have any of your friends or family members ever died by violence?" Of the 68 Legacy students who answered that survey question, 64.4% (44 students) had lost a friend or a family member to violence, and of this number, at least 35.3% (24 students) had lost 3 or more friends/family members to violence. Unfortunately, death by violence is something all too common for these students and their community.

Another question asked in this survey that speaks to the severity of trauma faced by Legacy students was, "Have you ever had sex with someone in exchange for money, drugs, food, a place to sleep, etc.?" Of the 67 Legacy High School students who responded to this question, 5 students reported having had sex with another person in order to secure food, drugs, or a place to sleep. While some readers may view this survey question as one not necessarily about trauma, but more about poor decision-making (given its reference to drug usage), it is important to understand the unique context around drug use at Legacy. Through observations, interviews, and anecdotal exchanges with school faculty, students, and parents, it was found that marijuana consumption is the primary form of drug use by Legacy High School students. When speaking to an administrator of the school's after-school program, I was informed of the high rate of marijuana use among Legacy students. To quantify this fact, during the same 2015 student survey, of the 70 students who were asked about their patterns of smoking cigarettes in the last 30 days, 63 students reported that they had not smoked cigarettes in the past 30 days. In contrast

however, of the 68 students that answered the question, “During the past 30 days, on how many days did you use marijuana?” at least 36.8% (25 students) had consumed marijuana on at least one day. Whether recreationally or medicinally, many Legacy students’ use of marijuana is a direct result of their efforts to cope with, or temporarily minimize, the pain and trauma of personal experiences<sup>36</sup>. One parent shared with me during an interview that although she does not condone it, “part of the reason why [her daughter] smokes weed is because it numbs her from her trauma.”

In recognition of the rate and rationale of student marijuana use at Legacy, a student being intoxicated or in possession of marijuana (with no intent to sell) is not treated as immediate grounds for suspension or referral for expulsion<sup>37</sup>. Instead, parent conferences, restorative justice, and substance abuse preventions are used. One of the elements of Legacy being a full-service community school is its implementation of Coordination of Services Team (COST). The COST at Legacy High School is made up of the school principal, physical and mental health professionals, social workers, teachers, and other members of the staff who have close relationships with students to provide wraparound interventions. Additionally, the use of a restorative justice intervention for circumstances such as marijuana use allows adults within the school to have productive interactions with students to get to the root cause of students’ issues and redirect the behavior to encourage long-term lifestyle changes rather than the short-term, and often negative, impacts of a suspension or expulsion.

In large part, the high levels of trauma for Legacy students stem from their personal/home environment and circumstances and the social context of the neighborhoods they

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<sup>36</sup> Research finds that cannabis (marijuana) users support a rational choice of use to its advantages for relaxing, coping with stress and anxiety, managing chronic pain, and sleep difficulties (Ogborne, et al., 2000; Hathaway, 2009).

<sup>37</sup> According to the school’s discipline policy, drug possession with the intent to sell and/or exchange are grounds for suspension and expulsion.

live in. During this study, all faculty, teachers, parents, and even some student participants discussed the traumatic elements of students' lives that take place away from school but influence their in-school experiences. This trauma comes in the form of violence and drug use, but it also can include the complexity of poor physical and mental health, a lack of eating healthy foods, poor sleep and hygiene, and harboring unaddressed emotional issues. These factors all impact students and the way they engage in school, and schools must navigate through them to educate children. Mr. Bolar, who has taught at the school for three years and testifies that he has grown both as an individual and a teacher through learning to better meet his students where they are, explained the outside-of-school influences on his students like this:

*That's what makes education so complex. It's that you are dealing with people and all of their baggage that comes along with that, whether that's, in our case, trauma or just even the basics of like, I had a bad conversation with one of my parents this morning and I'm bringing that into your classroom. I didn't get enough sleep last night because I was up playing video games... Whether or not a student is focused because they've just been eating a bunch of nasty, greasy food, and they can't even pay attention...or they haven't eaten any food at all, they are just mad because they are so hungry. There is that, and then you can take their health... So many of my students should be wearing glasses and don't—so they can't see what's happening. Some students have diabetes at such an early age and have to worry about that and their blood sugar levels. In terms of mental health what kind of trauma have you experienced, whether it's related to immediate family death, just the fact that you lived in a neighborhood where there is a lot of gun violence, how are you affected by that? ...Students who are in foster care systems, and how that*

*affects their mental health and their ability to focus on the learning material. Those are all of the things that are not even education related.*

The high level of trauma that students face at Legacy High School was one of the first things that I recognized during this ethnographic study. I witnessed students discussing or reacting to the trauma that they faced in their lives. Teachers often justified, or rather found consolation in some of the disruptions that many students presented because they understood the misbehavior to be correlated to the trauma students faced. Another question of the same survey cited above that quantifies the high levels of trauma that students at Legacy face asked, “During the past 12 months, did you ever feel sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more that you stopped doing some usual activities?” Seventeen of the 68 (25%) students who responded to that question indicated that they had felt sad or hopeless for almost an entire two-week period.

The findings around trauma were presented early in this chapter because it was one theme that arose within every participant group and on a fairly consistent basis. Further, trauma was the second theme presented because the severity of the trauma that exists within the Legacy community informs much of what takes place within the school, such as academic outcomes and social climate. It is also important to note that the findings reported both from my own interviews and ethnographic research (as well as the secondary survey data) are only small representations of Legacy High School students. For many, the traumatic realities that Legacy students face extend far beyond those recounted here. Even for those students who do not experience trauma firsthand in their personal lives, there are residual effects of attending a school with high rates of trauma present. The need to address the traumatic experiences at school disrupts the school day for all students. In fact, the realities of trauma influence many other

aspects of students' lives, some of which will be highlighted through the description of other thematic patterns from this study.

### **Theme 3: Generational Affiliations Within Legacy High School**

Another theme of equal significance during this study was the generational legacy within Legacy High School. This factor, which is so deeply rooted in the school's history and influences much of what takes place in the school today, lends to the rationale for using Legacy High School as the school's pseudonym for this ethnographic study. Largely due to the fact that for decades Legacy High School has been the only traditional high school serving this particular neighborhood, it was the most conveniently accessible high school choice for many families. However, even as families grew and moved outside of the school's surrounding area, many travel the extra distance, passing many other school options, to attend Legacy High School.

Many families who have lived in the area for years and decades attended Legacy themselves and have continued to send their generational offspring there. However, more than the convenience of the school being close to home, families, parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles continue to send their children to Legacy High School in large part to retain family tradition. In fact, there are some students who travel many miles, from different cities within the state<sup>38</sup>, simply to attend Legacy High School. Additionally, there is an atypical generational legacy relationship present throughout the body of faculty and staff as well. Of the 23 formal participants of this study, nearly half had previous relations with the school that influenced their current affiliation with Legacy High School.

For many, attending Legacy High School or working there is treated as a dedication to tradition. When students and parents talk about why they chose Legacy as their school of choice,

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<sup>38</sup> This is permissible through the state's education code regarding Interdistrict Transfers.

most did not discuss the school as simply an educational organization, but they described it as almost a living entity of their family and cultural history. When teachers and staff who are Legacy alumni discuss why they chose to return to their high school in an educator capacity, they deemed it less of a job choice and more as a calling or duty to the community.

**Student and family generational relations to Legacy High School.** Of the seven currently enrolled students who were interviewed for this study, five of them had a close relative (i.e., parent, grandparent, and/or older sibling) that previously attended Legacy and influenced their choice to attend. One participant was the child of a current Legacy staff member. When students were asked why they chose to attend Legacy High School, many students' sole reasoning was because their family attended. One student, a senior and popular student at Legacy, said: "I came to Legacy for high school because Legacy is just an amazing school...my great-great-great-great-grandmother [potential exaggeration] went here. It's just been a family of people who've graduated and who've been successful, so why not carry my family legacy on?" Another student explained that both of his parents, as well as his grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, attended Legacy in the past; he and his brother are current students; and his family has already decided that his younger siblings will also attend in the future.

Of the two current parents that were interviewed for this study, one parent was a Legacy alumna whose son is a student at Legacy. She plans on all of her children attending the school. When asked why she chose for her children to attend her alma matter, she said:

*I just knew that's where he was going. My mom went there, my dad went there. My aunts, my uncles, my cousins, my whole family went there. Every person in my family has been a Legacy alumnus. It's just like, "No. we're going here." As long as it's there, all of them*

*are going. I don't know, it's just right. My grandmother, everybody. It's just the school that we went to...*

Although the second interviewed parent did not attend Legacy High School, she explained that she still feels like she has deep roots in the school and its culture. Growing up, many of her friends attended Legacy and she shared high school experiences with them. Additionally, her children's (one of which attends Legacy) father attended Legacy, and many people in her family attended Legacy as well.

**Legacy among faculty and staff.** The historical and generational legacy affiliation within Legacy High School revealed in this study was not limited to just students. Of Legacy High School's nearly 25 faculty and staff that were employed during the study (inclusive of both formal and informal participants), 6 were alumni. When the Legacy faculty and staff who attended the school decades ago discussed their choice to return to their alma mater in either a teaching or support staff capacity, they discussed the importance of returning back to a place that helped groom them into the adults that they are today. During an informal dialogue, one staff person recounted when she was a student Legacy High School over 20 years prior. She recalled that although many adults in the school were trying to help her, she did not make the best decisions or take advantage of the resources offered to her. However, despite her difficult time at Legacy, she knew that Legacy was a good school that aimed to serve and support students holistically, so she sent her own child there. Further, she decided to work there so she could offer and encourage students to take advantage of the unique supports that the school offers, which she did not take full advantage of herself. Another member of the Legacy faculty, an administrator who attended Legacy in the 1980s, noted that his parents attended in the 1950s, and his siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins attended also. Shortly after graduating from high school, he returned

to Legacy to become a teacher. After teaching for a short time, he made some career changes that took him away from Legacy for over a decade, but he returned 10 years later in an administrative capacity. He explained that when the opportunity to return to his alma mater arose, he felt it was only right that he returned “home.”

Of the nearly 20 full-time Legacy High School faculty and staff members, the teacher with the longest tenure, whom the Legacy community affectionately calls “Doc,” graduated from Legacy in the 1960s and has been a teacher there for well over two decades. Her long-time affiliation with the school has provided her the privilege to see the school’s evolution over time. Additionally, because of her length of time there, she has also been the teacher of parents, siblings, and other relatives of current Legacy students. For Legacy faculty staff who have been there over the years and have seen various cohorts of students matriculate, this interaction with multiple people from students’ families allows for faculty and staff to gain a better understanding of the personal lives of students. Additionally, this unique perspective allows them to more holistically understand their students and better assess what may or may not influence their experiences and ultimate success at school. The high rates of multiple generations of one family attending Legacy High School, as well as faculty and staff also being Legacy alumni, add an interesting and notable element to the school culture at Legacy High School. Because there are so many direct affiliations between families and the school community over time, this element adds a level of familiarity and communal bonds to the school culture. All of the faculty and staff who were once students at Legacy say they felt compelled out of a sense of responsibility and service to offer back to the school and community. While they recognize that there are plenty of other schools they could teach at without having to deal with the high levels of daily stress that they do, they all suggest that they have a vested interest in and personal ties to Legacy and would



not want to teach anywhere else. This element of the school community and culture at Legacy is similar to how historian V.P. Franklin (2002) described African American schools prior to public school desegregation. In this work he noted that African American teachers viewed their role of teacher as more than a profession, but as a personal commitment and responsibility to the Black community.

***Familial capital.*** Whether a product of students wanting to follow in the footsteps of their families through the Legacy High hallways, or educators seeking to return to their alma mater, participants who discussed the school's multiple generation affiliations mentioned that there is a unique experience and nurturing at Legacy that cannot be gained at any other school. To those who have family roots within the school, Legacy was described as more than just a school. To many, Legacy is a family, a special community, and a safe haven, and returning to Legacy is an investment. Many who have historical roots within Legacy and the city have established an interconnected sense of trust, support, and kinship that comes with being a member of the "Legacy Family."

The generational affiliation within Legacy High Schools suggests that the learning that takes place in this school is centered on more than academics. Yosso (2005) describes *familial capital* as the multiple forms of knowledge that are "nurtured among familia (kin)" (p. 79). These "knowledges" include a sense of community and the development of a history and intuition that are uniquely linked to and result from the experiences of one's culture (Yosso, 2005). At Legacy, students are taught the importance of self-love and identity shaping, resilience, interpersonal development, conflict resolution, and restoration. They are not taught these lessons through traditional classes but learn them through how they are treated and nurtured within the school.

Yosso describes *familia* not as a family that one is related to by blood, but as a network that expands to include those community members with whom we share commonalities. In her work, Yosso (2006) cites Delgado–Gaitan (2001) and explains that “[i]solation is minimized as families ‘become connected with others around common issues’ and realize that they are ‘not alone in dealing with their problems’” (p. 79). The non-traditional learning and familial bonds that are present within Legacy’s school community offers its students a body of knowledge that cannot be learned from a textbook—but only through their unique experiences at Legacy.

#### **Theme 4: Community Influence and Engagement**

The full-service community school model is intended to improve the overall learning and development of students by providing the in-school services necessary to alleviate the hardships inflicted by repeated social and ecological experiences. This is done by providing convenient access to human services and resources to students, families, and community members by having them centrally located in a nearby school or available through school-community partnerships. Through this organizational structure, the community school model aims to benefit both the internal (those individuals directly related to the school) and external school communities (those neighbors who are only related to the school through regional proximity).

When initially designing this study (prior to coming to the site), it was my intention to include an examination of the relationship dynamic between Legacy High School and the neighboring community as an element to be researched through my fourth research question. This research design intention is reflected in the fourth research question of this study<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> How is Legacy High School’s functioning as a full-service community school reflected in its integrated relations with the larger community?

However, once I became familiar with Legacy High School's social dynamic and the evolving historical and social shifts of the area, I realized that while there were clear lines of distinction between the internal and external Legacy High School communities, these lines were not necessarily based on regional proximity. Rather, they are based more on the level of stake and buy-in that groups of people have in the school as an organization.

Prior to beginning data collection at the research site, I was informed that one of the largest stakeholders and decision influencers of Legacy High School is the community. When this relationship structure was relayed to me, the term "community" did not mean the residential neighbors who lived in close regional proximity of the school building but instead described a collective body of active alumni, parents, community leaders and activists, and others with a vested interest in Legacy High School. Surprisingly, there is very limited interaction between Legacy High School and those neighbors in close proximity who do not have some sort of direct affiliation with the school. For the purpose of this section of the dissertation, the phrase "the community" describes the collective body of active Legacy alumni, former faculty and staff, parents, and interested stakeholders.

**Community influence.** The community", as defined by Legacy, has a large level of influence on the organization, functioning, and decision-making at Legacy High School. For well over 50 years Legacy alumni, parents, community members, and other interested stakeholders have unabashedly expressed their concerns, likes, and dislikes about what takes place operationally and administratively at Legacy High School. From what classes are offered and what the school is called to curriculum design, "the community" has remained very vocal and involved in decision making. In fact, the level of influence the community has, and the weight in which their input is given in many school decisions and activities, has become an

embedded and integral part of the school's overall identity.

During this study, it was made very clear that community engagement at Legacy is high. It was very rare on any given day for some current or former Legacy parent, teacher, community activist, or other volunteer who worked closely with the school's young people to not be present on campus. One teacher's quote supports my observations. In her interview, when I asked her if she engaged the community in her role as a special education teacher, she said, "This is a special school in that community engagement is just everyday, there is always somebody from the community coming in."

**Community engagement.** Because Legacy High School values the influence and input from the community, the high rate of community engagement seems very intentional. Joyce Epstein, a research expert on intentional partnerships between schools, families, and communities, describes community involvement as the coordination of resources and services for families, students, and the school, in collaboration with community groups, to provide experiences and opportunities to increase student learning (Epstein & Salinas, 2004). Epstein's work on school-family-community partnerships is credible and valuable, but her use of the term "involvement" versus "engagement"<sup>40</sup> throughout her scholarship leaves room for a one-sided (rather than collaborative) implication of school-community partnerships. Therefore, while school-community-family partnerships at Legacy High School are aligned with the standards of Epstein, the term *community engagement* will be used for the purposes of explanation here and illustration of the authentic ways Legacy and their stakeholders work

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<sup>40</sup> Although mostly differentiated in work regarding parent engagement in schools, scholars have worked to highlight distinct differences in meaning between "involvement" and "engagement." "Involvement" has been described as an act of "doing to" a community with the intent to help and serve, whereas "engagement" has been described as partnering with those who are intended to be serviced in the creation and implementation of those services (Ferland 2011). Calabrese Barton, Drake, Perez, St. Louis, and George (2004) \ (again, this work is focused on parental engagement, but the theory can be applied to community engagement) describe involvement as actions that are done, and engagement as the understanding of how and why engagement actions take place as well as lend to one's larger experience.

together. Legacy High School's leadership, faculty, and staff work to authentically engage the community in most, if not all, elements of the school's functioning.

Legacy leadership, and its internal school community, is intentional about engaging community stakeholders in school-level decisions. One way in which this is done is by creating delegation committees that include community representation for projects that lead to major school decisions. During my time at Legacy, the school was identified as needing to receive district-level intensive support in school transformation and improvement. Through this transformation process, the school was to be provided with monetary and instructional support from the district to gain some of the tools necessary to better serve its students. Part of this process required creating a new school curriculum program and submitting a proposal. The proposal writing committee for this project consisted of teachers, students, parents and guardians, faculty, alumni, and community stakeholders. Even though alumni and other community stakeholders are not directly impacted by Legacy's day-to-day operations, they still are valuable contributors. They work to see that Legacy High continues to progress into a great school while preserving its historical value and culture. During our interview, Shauna, a staff member in the school-based health clinic, explained the unique way the community contributes to Legacy and that she believes it is what makes Legacy different from any other school.

*The deep roots and sense of history, I think, folks show up from Legacy and folks are invested. Someone could have graduated from here like fifty years ago and if something happened to Legacy there is a sense of Legacy belongs to us. It belongs to the community. You don't see that with all the other schools. It is the sense of pride and also investment with the community here. It's one of the things that make it different.*

**The “double-edged sword” of Legacy’s community engagement.** The Legacy community’s engagement and influence are highly valued and are monumental elements of the school’s identity. However, through my observations I found that the same fervor the community has for being a part of school change sometimes serves as a double-edged sword. On one hand, the input from the community is helpful in assuring that as the school evolves, it remains rooted in its historical culture on principles. On the other hand, because it is often older alumni who are most vocal about the changes that the school undergoes, their input and pushback on proposed shifts can inhibit the school from progressing toward becoming a 21st-century learning space.

The most vocal members of the “Legacy community” are alumni and former staff members who were actively affiliated with Legacy during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s and seasoned stakeholders who are well into their 60s and 70s. While this distinction is by no means intended as age-based discrimination, it is offered to highlight a distinct social shift between the 50s, 60s, and 70s and present day, and how those shifts have changed the needs of schools. For example, in a public community engagement meeting on April 28, 2014, about the school’s redesign efforts and plans, an older gentleman who was an athletic coach at Legacy during the late 1960s stated, “You know, back when I was at Legacy, we had classes like woodshop and home economics...classes that taught students life skills. We need to bring those classes back. We need to teach these students the necessary life skills.”<sup>41</sup> While the school leadership welcomed his opinion, his comment also represents the out-of-date understanding of students’ educational needs that are often made by older members of the community group. During this meeting, suggestions were made regarding the changes that the school could make to improve course offerings in order to meet the needs of the current Legacy student population. However,

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<sup>41</sup> The exact statement was not recorded verbatim in observation field notes. This is a paraphrased recount that is used to represent the captured meaning of the statement made.

often advice from older Legacy community members was based on what was best when they attended or worked at the school—some over 40 years ago—without fully considering the evolution of needs for youth in a 21st-century society.

Because the Legacy community has such a large influence on the things that happen at the school, often times progress or change is hindered because community members will filibuster a process if they are not fully satisfied. In fact, when I first proposed my research to the school leadership, I was warned that it first had to garner the blessing of the community, because even with a good idea, the community will often rebut with backlash simply because they were not included in the decision-making process. Community engagement is an active effort by an organization to engage the community in a way that facilitates collective partnership in decision-making and practices that considers the needs of all involved, but overzealous influence can hinder intended progress when engagement lacks systematic structure and controlled shared governance.

### **Theme 5: The Importance of Interpersonal Relationships**

As I began to get familiar with the Legacy High School population one thing became very apparent—interpersonal relationships are very important. Reflecting on the previous four themes overviewed in this chapter, a commonality among them is their connectedness to interpersonal relationships—namely themes 1 and 2, “Legacy Fam” and students’ experience with trauma. Whether positive or negative, much of what takes place at Legacy is a by-product of the way the members of the Legacy community interact with their families and friends, teachers or students, peers, and their community.

First, the social structure that has created the “Legacy Family” is one that is fostered by the interpersonal relationships that are present among the members in the school—between

students and adults, and students and their peers. Second, Legacy students' experiences of trauma are typically related to the interrupted and strained relationships within their immediate family, peer groups, or communities. A Legacy teacher, Mr. Bolar, described interpersonal relationships at Legacy this way:

*There's something unique about Legacy that makes relationships so important, because many of our students have had relationships that have failed them, in one way or another, whether that's a father who's been absent, a death in the family that's affected them. Because of that trauma of what the immediate relationships look like, regarding family or the neighborhood and things like that, that students need a rapport with the teacher more than maybe another student, who might be [getting those needs met] outside of the classroom. Some students are really meeting those needs of those positive adult relationships in other ways. They do have the two-parent household where both parents are pouring into them, and have this network of a family that's really coming around them and supporting them. They have examples of people, who have gone to college, or have examples of people, who have been "successful" in their career. They are getting that mentorship elsewhere, whether they realize it or not. Those are students, who potentially don't really care about what the rapport is with their teacher. The students, who might be having more difficulty outside of school, might also still subconsciously care a little bit more about what their rapport is with the teacher, even if that manifests itself with negative behaviors*

Using the theoretical lens of Bronfenbrenner, both of these areas of interpersonal relations influence the way individuals grow and develop. Additionally, they provide implications to how people make meaning of the world. The way students experience



relationships outside of school influences the way they foster relationships inside of school. Bronfenbrenner and Boocock theorize that this interconnectedness influences how students ultimately experience learning. One of Legacy's teachers exemplified this reality when she told me that she does not see her first role as a math teacher but instead as a relationship builder. She said, "I can't even teach anything about a triangle, unless they first trust me."

The teacher above makes a poignant statement. In order for teachers to be able to build relationships with their students, there must first be trust. Not until trust is established between the teachers and students at Legacy can an environment conducive to learning be created. Legacy High School serves a community that has been historically underserved<sup>42</sup>. The above excerpt from my interview with Mr. Bolar explains that because some of the students at Legacy have been let down—or completely failed—by the people closest to them, they seek out the missing positive interpersonal connections with people whom they have grown to trust at school. In contrast, the intentions of those who do not prove a to be committed to building trust with Legacy High School, or its students, are often questioned.

**Trust and distrust are very influential elements in the school.** Realizing that elements of trust and distrust contributed to the social climate at Legacy, I challenged myself to take a closer look at how trust and distrust specifically impacted student learning. I found that perceptions of trust and distrust have shaped the school's identity and influence the way students engage with both the teachers at the school and the material being taught. Two of the ways that trust and distrust play out at Legacy High are through (1) students' willful defiance toward

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<sup>42</sup> This is coupled with layer of the historic feeling by administration, faculty, staff and community stakeholders that the school as a whole has been underserved through school policy and resource allocation, as described in Chapter 4.

engagement in learning and (2) the patterns in relationships that seemingly contribute to, and result from, the school's high rate of teacher turnover.

***Willful defiance.*** School districts vary on how they define “willful defiance.” However, it can generally be described as a broad category of minor offenses such as not responding to a teacher's request or sleeping in class. In more severe instances, it can include misbehaviors such as cursing at a teacher or student or disrupting the learning environment. Willful defiance occurred almost daily during my time at Legacy. In some cases, depending on the social atmosphere in the school at the time, there could many instances in one day. While some students display deviant behavior out of mere spite, research shows that youth misbehavior is often linked to more deep-rooted and unaddressed social and emotional needs. Often, when I witnessed students misbehave, they were displaying attention-seeking behavior (either knowingly or subconsciously) in hopes that someone would take the time to intimately connect with them. In other cases the observed behavior, and understanding of that behavior, can simply be a result of social dissonance between the teacher and student. When this care and connection does not happen, the frustration and resentment felt by the student often come in the form of misbehavior and defiance. Ms. Jazz described how this takes place at Legacy.

*Our kids really, wow... They just really need a lot of holistic—it's a holistic approach that you have to have with our kids. You have to nurture that whole kid. And they can see through people who don't care about them, and it's important for our kids today, to let them know that you care about them. They gotta know that you care about them before they will allow you to deal with any other piece of me. Teacher, I'm pissed off because I didn't eat breakfast this morning, or I'm pissed off because last night mom and dad, or uncle or auntie, or blah blah blah, or somebody went to jail, or somebody*

*broke in, or blah blah blah, so whatever you have to say teacher, I'm not even hearing you, and it's going to be me and you today teacher. So you have to deal with that...*

This quote affirms much of what I witnessed while at Legacy. There were many altercations that I saw between students and teachers. Many cases started the same way—the student would do something in class in opposition to the teacher's instruction, and the teacher would send the student out of class to one of the school's disciplinarians. In some cases someone with whom the student had an already established trusting relationship was able to intervene by talking with the student and getting to the root of the problem. Many cases proved that the student simply had an outside issue that was bothering them, and an informal mediation between the student and teacher was able to bring about agreement and compromise. In other cases, students were referred to one of the clinicians to receive a more formal intervention. While some of the observed cases of willful defiance could be addressed through restorative justice, there were cases where traditional discipline practices did indeed have to be adhered to.

Most faculty and staff at Legacy work to see the whole child and take into account the deeper context behind students' behavior. They recognize the vicious cycle of interrupted learning time that can take place when students display willfully defiant behaviors. The initial behavior leads to disruption within the immediate learning environment for both themselves and their peers. Furthermore, in cases where the behavior resulted in suspension (either in-school or out-of-school), even more learning time was missed, leading to further negative academic implications. Some teachers like Ms. Tealstrong, who is both a licensed social worker at the school and a teacher, recognized this. She explained to me that sometimes

students need a safe space to release whatever pressures are bothering them in order to create the internal capacity to fully engage in school. She said,

*[i]t's hard for them sometimes. Sometimes, they need the space like my room—like when you came back in and I had students [in here], all of them [were] having something that was going on. It's like, "OK, you guys come in here so you can be a full student once you leave out of here. Get it off your chest, whatever it is."*

Ms. Tealstrong's statement illustrates her knowledge of how internal issues that students deal with, if not addressed, can negatively impact student learning. When we began to discuss what could be done to alleviate some of the issues at the school to make it a better place for students to learn in, and adults to work in, we talked about the elements of trust and distrust. Here is an excerpt from this part of our interview.

**Ms. Tealstrong:** *I think if they really trusted everybody in the building, it will be a better student experience, but they only trust certain people.*

**CDA:** *Tell me a little bit about the trust, or the distrust rather.*

**Ms. Tealstrong:** *A lot of our kids, some of the thing they face, people who don't know better might report them to CPS or call the police. Our kids don't trust. They don't want people in their family business. They don't want that. They rather hold it. We had a situation two days ago, a young man crying. See me in class, and you know young men don't cry in front of people. He just broke out crying. Everybody's trying—even his parents were trying to figure out what was wrong with him. To this day, none of us know what was wrong with him. Whatever he was carrying affected the rest of his school day. He never trusted anybody, not even his mom and dad to say, "This is what's going on." Just building their trust, we spend most of our time building trust now.*

The experiences shared above represent only a few of the documented realities that I observed during my time at Legacy. With students, especially those who attend schools with demographics that represent a majority Black student population and have high rates of poverty, willful defiance is too often misattributed to a lack of care for learning or a lack of discipline. In some cases, educators really must take intentional care to better learn about their students and their life circumstances to understand what other issues might be triggering the student and leading to their negative display of behavior. One teacher, Ms. Kelly, described this behavior as work avoidance. She said:

*The population of students inherit what they go through, they bring it to school and transfer it on to us. They have a high habit of what I call, "Work avoidance." [The student is] just not doing anything, but not because they don't know how but for whatever reasons like, "today I can't concentrate because I am hungry, or today I can't concentrate because I don't understand how this relates to my life, or I am thinking about how we're going to turn our lights back on, and you want me to talk about this stupid triangle."*

In cases like these, the willful defiance is simply a coping mechanism that students use to deal with other, more deeply rooted issues that they may be facing.

Often, as witnessed at Legacy, the breakdown between the expectations of students and their behaviors comes from a lack of trust or understanding between a particular teacher and student. One teacher offered a rationale for this disconnect among Legacy students.

*A lot of students at Legacy can't allow anybody to see them fail or can't allow anyone to see them as vulnerable. The moment that that happens or might happen, they*

*immediately get this aggressive nature to them to combat any sort of weakness that might have been shown the moment before...but I've never seen a Legacy kid quit on something that they thought was of value.*

**Teacher turnover.** Another significant way in which the role of trust and distrust as a contributor to interpersonal relationship dynamic plays out at Legacy is reflected in the school's high rate of teacher turnover. Legacy High School has a long record of high teacher turnover. In my interview with Mr. Bolar, who had been a teacher at Legacy for three years at the time, identified himself as the teacher with the third-longest tenure track. "Doc" had been at Legacy for over two decades, and Ms. Jazz had been there for seven years. So with the exception of these three teachers, all of the teachers at Legacy had been there for fewer than three years. By the time the school year came to a close and my official time at my Legacy High School research site came to an end, at least five of the teachers and staff who were there while I was there were also leaving. Considering the school only had 18 full-time faculty and staff, that came to nearly one-third of the school's teaching force departing.

When reflecting on the teacher turnover rate, I wanted to make meaning of it. The discourse around why so many teachers did not stay at Legacy was largely centered on individuals' inability to handle the "chaos" that is common to Legacy High. The teachers who suddenly leave Legacy are often described as "not having what it takes" to make it at Legacy. Having been in the midst of the day-to-day Legacy High School world, I could mostly agree with this notion. However, I was curious as to what the "it" was that distinguished between an otherwise qualified teacher "making it" or not at Legacy High School. When I began looking for clues into this phenomenon, even much of the rationale for the high teacher turnover rate at Legacy was rooted in interpersonal relationships.

The connection, or rather disconnection, between the building and fostering interpersonal relationships between adults and students at Legacy was almost cyclical in nature. While I was on Legacy's campus I actually witnessed teachers packing up their belongings in the middle of the school day, declaring that "I just can't take it anymore, I have too many health issues to deal with this." In some cases, this departure was as early as the fourth day of the school year.<sup>43</sup> While some of the teachers who left attributed their departure to students' overall lack of respect and behavioral issues, when students talked to me about the teacher turnover rate, they argued that the teachers who leave do not really care about the children.

While at Legacy, I had a conversation with a group of students about them driving teachers away. In one student's interview, he explained this student behavior dynamic in this way.

**CDA:** *What makes a not so good teacher?*

**Zury:** *Quitter.*

**CDA:** *What do you mean by that?*

**Zury:** *For example, we have teachers that would leave because they couldn't handle the pressure the students were giving. A lot of the students literally do what they do to see if the teacher's going to stay or not, if they're worth being there for them. Two other teachers didn't succeed. They were both Spanish teachers. They do it to you the whole school year to see if you're going to stay. They come back next year. It's like, "Dang! What's the point of that? Are you ever going to be quiet and learn something or read? You might like her and never talk again in class if you let her say something."*

**CDA:** *Does that make for a not so good teacher or student?*

**Zury:** *It makes both. It makes a bad teacher for giving up and leaving, trying to start*

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<sup>43</sup> Although my initial data collection phase was during February through May of the 2014-2015 school year, on a later visit to Legacy High School I witnessed one of the newly hired teachers packing up and leaving on the fourth day of the school year. I was getting out of my car and he was leaving with his things. When I saw that he was leaving with boxes, I asked why and this was his response.

*over somewhere else. It also makes a bad student for testing the teacher so much.*

This duality shows that on the one hand, teachers leave Legacy because they do not feel respected by the students, but on the other hand Legacy students sometimes push the teachers out because they do not trust that the teacher cares or is committed to them.

What I came to learn about Legacy youth is that they have very limited trust of new adults that come into the school. They are skeptical of intention, of care, and of commitment from teachers (largely due to high turnover). Some of the students have admitted to intentionally being hard on new teachers to test their commitment and ability to “hang” at Legacy. However, it should be noted that just because Legacy students want teachers who they can have a rapport with, they do not seek to have a teacher that will not critique or set firm boundaries with them. For example, when I was interviewing two students together, Anika, a graduating senior at the time of the study who was also a student-athlete and served on student council, described what she thought was a good teacher. She noted, “[t]hey don't tell you what you did good. They tell you what you did wrong so you can do great, because if they're constantly telling you what you did good, you don't really improve. Telling you what you did wrong, you improve on the skills that you already do good, and you end up doing great altogether”.

While some may initially discount the described student behavior of testing the teacher as unjustifiable disrespect, Miss Jazz offered a different perspective. Ms. Jazz, confessed to me that in her earlier years at Legacy she had considered leaving. However, after staying she recognized the duality of the issues—teachers not building caring relationships with students, and students’ defiance that might be a culprit of pushing teachers out. She said,

*Our children have been through a lot, they have been damaged, and teacher, if you do anything to not embrace them, and not give them every piece of you that you can give*



*them, we [referring to the students] will get rid of you. We will kick you out. Because our kids, they keep going through teacher, after teacher, after teacher, after teacher... you literally have to fight kids to let them know that you are not gonna back down. And I told my students that first week, I am not running away from here, you will run away from here, before I do.”*

In this statement, Ms. Jazz shows a clear understanding of why some Legacy students act out toward teachers. While she does not justify the students’ behavior, she does appear to recognize that there is a deeper reason for it, and part of that reason is that teachers must first work to let students know that they care for them before students will trust them enough to learn from.

***Resistance capital.*** Examining with a theoretical lens, behavior displayed by Legacy in order to determine if a teacher truly cares and is committed to them, in some cases can be understood as a form of proclaiming resistance capital. Yosso (2005) states that “resistance capital refers to those knowledge’s and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality” (p. 80). Through resisting, oppressed people engage in behaviors that challenge the status quo and provide them with empowerment (Yosso, 2005). Particularly studying resistant and oppositional behaviors in urban high schools Solóranzo and Bernal (2001) found that oppositional behaviors take many forms in students’ efforts to transform unequal conditions. So while most may consider this type of student behavior disrespectful, some scholars see it as a form of student empowerment.

## **Theme 6: Outsider Perception of Legacy High School**

Much of the “talk around town” of Legacy was that the school was full of dysfunction. Often times, when I shared with anyone that I came all the way from Illinois to spend time learning

about Legacy, I was often rebutted with an apathetic “good luck” or “why do you want to work there?” Very early in my time there it became apparent that the “outsider” perception of Legacy High School was tarnished and in most cases based on stereotypes, misinformation, or sheer ignorance.

The negativity that surrounded the outsider perspective of Legacy was brought to my attention early in the data collection process. A few weeks prior to my arriving to campus, the local mayor’s tour to three schools within Legacy’s district made local news—Legacy High School was one of these schools. Under normal circumstances, one might expect that a school would be excited to be 1 of 3 schools selected out of district’s 137 schools. However, that was not the case at Legacy. During a conversation I had with one of the school’s program administrators, Regina, she filled me in on why much of the Legacy school community was unimpressed by the mayor’s visit and offended by the news article that covered it. She explained to me that in the article the two other schools that were visited had positive things highlighted about them. One school was hailed for its career pathway that prepares students for careers in the medical field, and the second school was acknowledged for the millions of dollars in grant money it had recently received from a philanthropist. But the third school, Legacy, was simply identified as a struggling program. The journalist wrote, “the school was immaculate for the visit” and continued on describing how shiny the floors were. For other schools he discussed the successful academic programs and highlighted positive student experiences through interview quotes. However, for Legacy there were no interview quotes from anyone, and the positive that he did highlight he lessened to simply being a response to the mayor’s visit. Regina explained this to me in a frustrated and offended tone. She exclaimed, “Immaculate *for*<sup>44</sup> the visit? Shiny floors!? Our floors are always shiny!” She went on to explain to me that the journalist who wrote

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<sup>44</sup> Italicized to add emphasis.

this article always writes about Legacy in a negative light. However, it is not just the media that holds a negative perception of Legacy. Ms. Carla, more affectionately known as “Ms. C.,” told me:

*Even if it's not written, there is this perception that Legacy is bad—people will tell you it's bad. Before I even got here, everything I heard about Legacy was bad, right. And I come in, I remember my first day, I come in through the entrance, and I'm seeing like, African Nations on the wall, I'm seeing ancestors on the wall... I'm thinking what is wrong? There are Black men that like step up, that engage you, that help you out... I used to ask the boys—because I would ride my bike, they didn't even know me—can you take this upstairs for me? Oh sure, good, like these young people are sweet, they are loving, they're really kids, there is an innocence that they have. Even through all of their craziness... and I've worked at schools all over [the city], and this is my favorite school.*

Because a major element of the full-service community school model is rooted in the school's relationship with the community (and I had picked up on the negative perception through my initial Internet searches on the school), some of my interview questions were targeted to get participants to directly address how outsiders' perceptions of the school were communicated to them. To the school's teachers, faculty, and staff one of my interview questions asked, “How do other people respond to you when you tell them that you work at Legacy?”

While answering this question, Ms. Kelly explained to me that she has had some major disagreements with some of her friends based on the things they say about Legacy and the students there. She told me that she often had to remind them that they are not far from the area and how these people who would never send their children to Legacy are now saying the same things that people used to say about the school they attended. Similarly, Ms. Brooks, one of the

school's few Caucasian teachers, explained to me that when people discuss her working at Legacy, they discuss the school and students from a cultural inferiority model perspective. Starting with an outburst of laughter she shares her response to the question "[h]ow do other people respond to you when you tell them that you work at Legacy?"

*What was my favorite one? "Good for you!" [laughs] What? What do you mean good for me? It's not, though. If you think about my personal health, and how much stress I take on, but "OK, thanks very much." Or some people are like "You're an angel." They're kind of putting on that white superior god complex on to me, even though that that's not my bang. That's what happens the most—the thinking that I'm just doing so great for these poor kids. Maybe I'm not. The fact that you assume that maybe just because I teach at Legacy that I'm making a big difference for the young people of color community is just a mess. I could be playing videos all day long. Don't give me any sort of honors just because you think the environment is really tough. That's the biggest thing that bothers me. Sometimes with more real people or people who are maybe in a struggle with teaching as well, they might be like "Oh my god, that must be so difficult." Then it's like "Yeah." It's freaking ridiculous how difficult this job is, but I'm here and I wouldn't want to work anywhere else, because I don't want an easy job. It's the "Oh, wow. Good for you." [laughs] My mom does that all the time, like "Those sweet kids are so indebted to you." No they're not, they just came to school. I have off days, they don't learn anything on those off days. [laughs]. Don't make me a king among peasants or something—I don't want that.*

Many teachers who are committed to Legacy High School often find themselves defending their work, their purpose, and their students to outsiders. While the negative perceptions of Legacy are

prevalent in adult social circles, the things that the students hear about the school that they attend and the student body they represent are just as, if not even more, negative.

Similar to the interview question I asked of Legacy faculty and staff, I asked students to tell me about their first impression of Legacy and how their peers who go to other schools react to them attending Legacy. Krystal, a senior, explained that before she even got to high school, she was already hearing negative things about Legacy in her peer group.

*They told me in middle school that [it] was a bad school and "You don't want to go there." "Nothing but dummies come out of this school" and things of that nature. But when I got here, it was a little rough. People were talking about how it was a bad school. I started taking that in, but as things have changed and now I'm in my senior year, it is actually not that school. It's not that school that people perceive it to be. It's actually a great school. I'm graduating salutatorian, and I'm not a dummy.*

This statement was interesting to me because even among middle-school-aged students, perceptions and stereotypes of high schools are already being established. In fact, this point was solidified even further for me when I was walking downtown to get some lunch, months after official data collection had ended. While I was standing in line at a local restaurant, there was a group of four or five girls a few places ahead of me. I watched them. Although they were not being disrespectful or overtly rude, their behavior was clearly bothering the cashier, and understandably so. Even though they did not do anything with negative intention, they were also not practicing common courteous manners by doing things such as trying to demand the cashier's attention while she was helping another customer and talking on the cellphone while their order was being taken. In their defense, though, they were not any older than 13 years—some social cues and lessons still are not apparent at that time. When I left and began walking

back to my destination, the girls walked behind me and I could hear them talking, so I said hello and began to engage them in discussion.

*CDA: Hey, how are ya'll today?*

*Girls: We are good!?!*

*CDA: You all just getting out of school?*

*Girls: Yes!!!*

*CDA: What grade are you in? Where do you all go?*

*Girls: We are in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and go to West City Middle School<sup>45</sup>*

*CDA: Oh cool, so are you all going to Legacy next year? (This was a question just as much as it was a presumption.)*

*Girl 1: Eww, no, my mom told me I can't go to Legacy. She said they too ratchet there.*

*Girl 2: No, I'm either going to go to North County Tech or River Walk.<sup>46</sup>*

*CDA: Why do you want to go to North County Tech or River Walk? (I directed my question to Girl 2, as Girl 1 and the rest of the group's non-verbal reactions already offered insight into why they do not plan to attend Legacy.)*

*Girl 2: [Looks around and shrugs shoulders] I don't know. I just wanna go there. They are better schools.*

My walk with the girls down the street was short, so the dialogue was not very extensive. As we parted, I told them to be safe and encouraged them to work to make decisions based on their own experiences, rather than stereotypes and the opinions of others. Although this conversation was short, it was a completely random encounter that spoke to the findings in this

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<sup>45</sup> West City Middle School is a pseudonym for a local middle school within the same school district as Legacy High School. In fact, it is the feeder school to Legacy.

<sup>46</sup> North County Tech and River Walk are pseudonyms for two other high schools in the same public school district as Legacy. The discourse around these two schools is that they are the choice schools in the district. River Walk is located in the more affluent region of the city. Even though these schools both face their own set of unique challenges, the perception of them being choice schools saves them from negativity being associated with their challenged realities.

research. Legacy High School has been tarnished with a negative perception held by outsiders that has been woven into the social discourse of the city. Even as students matriculate through elementary and middle school, they have already been socialized to view Legacy in a certain way, and make assumptions about the students who attend and the educational opportunities that are offered there.

A reality about the chronically negative image that has been projected onto Legacy High School is that the school's reputation often gets tangled with the negative image of the area. Although the area in which Legacy is located can be dangerous at times (as alluded to in the discussion of Theme 1 "Legacy Fam"), the school's leadership and internal community work very hard to place the school as a barrier between students and the negatives of the surrounding community. In my conversation with Jared, he explained this entanglement of the school's reputation with the area reputation:

*Before when I told people that I was going to Legacy everybody told me that it is bad because of the environment. I grew up in [the] East<sup>47</sup>, and it's a lot worse than [the] West. So I really wasn't intimidated, it was just like, "OK, I'm going to a school in not like a dangerous area, but it has that reputation of being a dangerous area." I knew some people that went to Legacy before I came here and they said it was like a family, so I was kind of excited about coming to Legacy, especially coming from being home-schooled.*

When I asked another student "When you tell people who don't go to Legacy that you go to there, how do they respond?" The student responded, "Oh my God, that's so ghetto. Are there fights there all the time? Do people be shooting in the school? Isn't everybody on the football team from jail?"

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<sup>47</sup> This refers to the eastern region of the city.

Contrary to the negative reputation of the school and the neighborhood, when I asked students if their parents ever worried about them attending Legacy, most of them said that their parents did not worry about them being at the school. Some students explained that their parents were concerned about their safety to and from school, but overall they felt that the school did a good job at keeping the students safe.

Unfortunately however, Jared revealed to me the negative perceptions that are associated with Legacy High School are not always far removed. Jared recalled a time, two years prior, when district officials were on campus.

*I remember there were some district people that came up here. They were just watching the students at Legacy. Mainly watching my class, class of 2015, for the day. This was sophomore year. It was right after we took to [State High School Exit Exam], and they were watching us, and I overheard one of the district people, they was like, "well is this how they act everyday like, oh, my god, it's like a party in here 24/7!" They stayed. That's the day we got the [high school exit exam] scores back. My class set the highest [test] scores the school has seen in the past ten years. Now, they want to look surprised. I love how the students might look that stereotype, but they're not that stereotype. It throws people off. Students here and just in the West in general, they have so much history and it shows in their students and the people that grew up in the West.*

This example, in conjunction with the others in this section, highlight the fact that the negative perceptions of Legacy are largely rooted in stereotypes and generalizations

### **The (Untold) Counter Narrative**

Despite the negative things that many Legacy faculty, staff, and students shared about



what they hear when they tell people that they either attend or work at Legacy, almost every participant who had heard anything negative rebutted it with their own feelings of pride and satisfaction. In the conversations where I heard a student say that he or she would prefer if they were attending a school other than Legacy, I urged them to explain to me why. Most times, students could not articulate a clear or sound rationale for why they would prefer a different school; in other cases, students just simply based their desire on common stereotypes and master narrative of Legacy High School.

### **The Master Narrative**

Master narratives are the recounts of events, cultures, communities, and history told by the dominant group. These stories generate from a legacy of privilege and become the commonly understood and accepted understanding of a time in history or a group (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The consequence of master narratives is that the group whose story is being told becomes devoid of truth and replaced with a story that positions them in a position of social subordination. The master narrative is rooted in assumptions that are often based on classism, sexism, racism, ableism, etc. However, as a method to combat oppressors and the master narrative, oppressed.

### **Counter Storytelling**

Counter storytelling is methodology of Critical Race Theory that provides a tool to counter deficit storytelling—the master narrative—and offer space to develop research that is grounded in the experiences and knowledge of people of color and the oppressed (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). After data collection and analysis it was clear that while Legacy High School has been significantly plagued by academic and social challenges, it has also been plagued by oppression and an oppressive master narrative. The master narrative of Legacy undermines the

positivity and success that takes place at the school and cripples it in its progress toward excellence. In my conversation with Ms. C, she alluded to the fact that Legacy's identity has largely been shaped by points of privilege.

*I definitely think what happens here is very different than what is being talked about. And some of that is, I guess it's like...there is this microcosm of our own experiences, as Black people or people of color, and we don't tell our stories. It's like that adage of "as long as lion is not telling his story, the hunter will always be the victor." You know how that is. That's how this is because Legacy is not telling its story then the people get to tell the story instead of us.*

Unfortunately because Legacy High School is not the author of their own story, much of what the public knows about the school is rooted in cultural deficit thinking. Instead of taking the time to fully understand the context around the things that happen at Legacy, and how outside-of-school factors influence what takes place inside the school, many people just assume that Legacy students do not value school and no learning is taking place. In our conversation, Ms. Kelly made a statement to combat the deficit thinking that shapes Legacy's narrative and contextualizes the Legacy experiences in the trauma that many students face. She said:

*The kids here are dealing with a lot of trauma, a lot of hurt, a lot of pain. They are so angry some of them. But, they're smart. They're very talented, like the athletic talent these kids have, because they work hard. They don't realize that [athletics] is not the only way out, which is something I'm definitely working on with them. I would describe them like...they are resilient too. They go through a lot of stuff, but still a lot of them get up and come to school every day. OK, maybe they might not do anything when they get here, but*

*just that coming. Or, even the other way around. I just need to get out of that house, so I'm going to come to school every day. They have a lot going on.*

During interviews, there were other instances where it was evident that there is a counter narrative at Legacy that is not being told. There is a track record of student and school success at Legacy that the majority of the outside world does not know about. When I asked Anika to describe her schoolmates to me, she said:

*Very, very unique set of children. It just means someone...or a village of people that's willing to just be patient with them. The kids are very dynamic. I've never been around such amazing kids. They get on my nerves, though, sometimes, but it don't take away the fact that they're unique and amazing. I love my peers.*

There is a counter narrative that Legacy High School wants to tell—they need to tell. When I asked Krystal how attending Legacy High School makes her feel she told me:

*Attending Legacy makes me feel really good because I'm able to represent Legacy in a good way, and like my fellow young'un<sup>48</sup> said, there's a lot of misconceptions so I'm able to live out the truth of Legacy. I love [my school]. Go Warriors!*

Unfortunately for many people who think they know about Legacy High School, but whose knowledge is limited to their knowledge of the master narrative, Legacy seems to be nothing more than a struggling school that cannot keep teachers because the students don't care about learning anyway. Some see the school as a waste of space and find no value in it being open. However, in one of her statements, Anika personifies Legacy in a profound way, illustrating its value to its students and mystery to those who are unaware.

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<sup>48</sup> A slang term used to represent friend.

*Legacy, I love you. If you was a person I would show you how great you are and how grateful I am to know who you are, to be around you. I think you are pretty amazing. I'm sorry that the people don't get to see you, but I get to see you on a everyday basis. We will make you happy. I love you, Legacy.*

Although Anika was being silly when she made this statement, it is interesting how easily she was able to humanize Legacy as a great presence and place. This statement speaks to the sentiment of so many members of the Legacy High School community who have always seen and will continue to see Legacy High School—their school—as the epicenter of their community and hearts.

### **Summary**

Highlighting these six major themes allowed me to more richly consider and engage this study's research questions. The findings in this study illuminate the realities that shape Legacy High School. The full-service community school model is one that is designed to supplement the school with access to resources needed to better serve students. Because of this purpose, it would be unsound, irresponsible, and impossible to fully understand the implications of the full-service community school model on a student body, school, and community without fully understanding the circumstances that shape the school's functioning. The amount of time and closeness of space that I shared with the Legacy community allowed me to gain an intimate knowledge of Legacy High School. The depth and breadth of this knowledge proved fruitful in my attempt to answer the study's research questions, make policy recommendations, and contribute to literature on and praxis of the full-service community school model.

## Chapter 6| Landing, Jet Lag, and Unpacking: Discussion, Answering the Research Questions, and Future Research

As the researcher, one of the most trying realizations that I experienced was that it was difficult, if not impossible, to fully distinguish between what takes place at Legacy High School as a direct result of the school functioning as a full-service community school as opposed to a result of something more organically shaped by the culture, climate, and sociopolitical nature of the school itself. This realization caused me to question my methods as well as my interview and observation protocols.

*Did I ask the right questions? Did I observe the right elements of the school? Did I allow myself to get too “messily involved”<sup>49</sup> in the lives of my participants, and the day-to-day experiences of Legacy High? What, if anything, did I really learn about the full-service community school model in general? And how does this study contribute to the larger body of literature on this particular school model?*

These are all questions that I grappled with as I sifted through the data and attempted to address the study’s research questions. However, as a newly inducted honorary-member of my research community, I realized that I experienced the true rawness of Legacy High School. Over time it became clear that unless I fully understood who and what Legacy really was, there was no way for me to truly understand the role that the full-service community school model plays within the school space. Additionally, I realized that in order for policy makers and practitioners to fully and best serve schools—not just through this model, but through any school policy or practice—understanding and considering the unique contexts of the schools, students, and communities they seek to serve is imperative. In fact, considering the complexities of human, student, and

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<sup>49</sup> “Messily involved” is the phrase that one participant described what community meant to him.

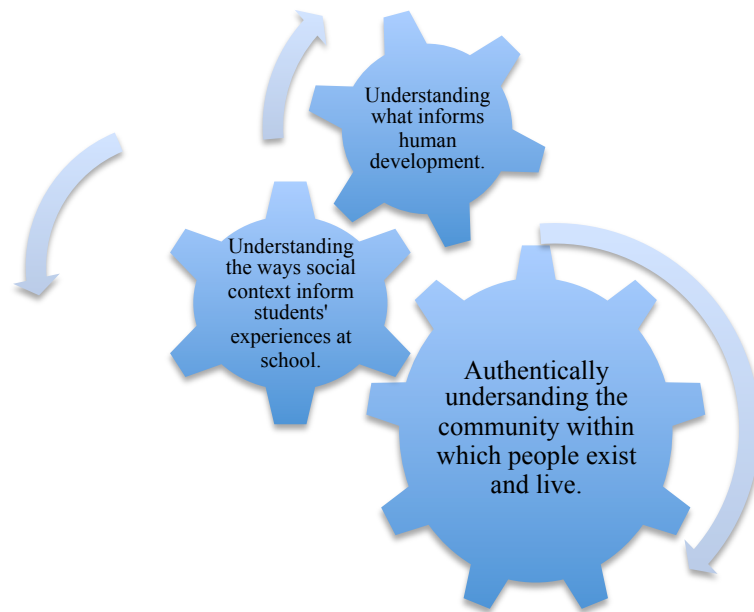
community development, as highlighted in this study's theoretical frameworks, such an in-depth understanding of the school's social climate proved both justifiable and necessary.

Bronfenbrenner and Boocock urge educators to recognize the multiple layers of individuals' development that influence their experiences within both social and school contexts. However, gaining a full understanding of these multiple layers is not possible without intimate connection with individuals and their communities. Further, Yosso's theory argues that outsiders cannot fully offer support communities unless they utilize those from within the community to inform their intended support. When all of these aspects of students' development are recognized and addressed simultaneously, schools will be able to more holistically meet their needs. Like each of the theoretical frameworks separately represented in the gear image below<sup>50</sup>, when these theories are used in tandem and all elements of student and community identity are considered in school practices and policies, more informed school decisions can be made. The theories of Bronfenbrenner and Boocock highlight the interconnectedness of the micro and macro levels of influence that shape students' lives, and Yosso's theory serves as a vehicle to support educators in making sense of those macro- and micro-level realities.

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<sup>50</sup> Text inside each gear reads (from top gear to bottom gear): 1. Understanding what informs human development. 2. Understanding the ways social context inform students' experiences at school. 3. Authentically understanding the community within which people exist and live.

**Figure 6.1**



Fully understanding the interconnectedness of the study's theoretical frameworks, and coupling them with the ethnographic findings, allowed me to better address the study's research questions, make policy and practice recommendations regarding the full-service community school model, and begin to develop viewpoints around future research.

#### **Landing: Addressing the Research Questions**

The findings shared in chapters 4 and 5 contributed to the answering of the four research questions that guided this study. The research questions sought to explore and address how the full-service community school attributes of Legacy High School were reflected in (1) academic aspects of students' experiences, (2) the non-academic impacts of students' experiences, (3) the school's culture and climate, and (4) the relationship between the school and the larger community. Based on these findings, the answers to the research questions are discussed below.

**Research Question 1: What attributes of the full-service community school model are reflected in Legacy High School’s practices around supporting students’ academic needs and development?**

Contrary to the common narrative that Legacy High School primarily focuses on shaping athletes, Legacy High strives to provide its students with enriching academic experiences. Although on state school data reporting, Legacy students have historically performed below proficient and advanced standards, Legacy continues to provide its students with academic experiences that are not available to most other students in the district and the state. Recognizing the need to support high academic exposure and achievement, Legacy’s administration, faculty, and staff have supplemented the learning that takes place within the traditional school day with outside of classroom time learning and support opportunities through tutoring, concurrent enrollment, STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics) exploration enrichment, and industry partnerships.

**Academic Support**

One of the primary features of the full-service community school organizational structure at Legacy is its partnership and affiliation with the agency A Second Home<sup>51</sup> (ASH). A Second Home is a regional nonprofit organization that has a cohort of staff working out of the Legacy High School campus to provide direct service to Legacy’s students. On Legacy’s campus, A Second Home is housed in and runs the school’s youth center and after-school programs, and it sponsors and oversees some of the school’s programming, creating a seamless relationship between the school and A Second Home. Because of this very close connection between Legacy and ASH, the students commonly refer to the physical space and the resources provided through

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<sup>51</sup> A Second Home is a pseudonym for the school’s partner organization to protect the anonymity of the research participants, school, and community.



ASH simply as “the youth center” and ASH’s staff as part of the “Legacy Fam.” Among its services, ASH provides both academic and non-academic support programs for students.

One of the key resources provided by ASH is academic support. On my first day on campus to conduct my research, there were also three tutors from an outside tutoring organization who were coming into Legacy’s learning space. ASH hired these tutors to be on campus throughout the school day to serve as a constant source of academic support that is integrated into the school day. These tutors pushed in and pulled students out of class, and they worked with students after school. There was also at least one tutor who was always present in the rooms assigned for detention or in-school suspension and credit recovery. Because the same tutors were on campus daily and available all day, students were able to get to know them, learn to trust them, and therefore become more likely to engage them in receiving academic support. Throughout my observations of the student–tutor work dynamic, I noticed that some of the students who behaved disruptively during class time would, in some cases, be more on-task while with the tutor and display an understanding of the topic. When asked in my interviews about their feelings about being supported and having access to resources at their school, most students mentioned that having the tutors on campus was an asset, either for themselves specifically or for their peers who might need additional help. Additionally, school administrators mentioned in a staff meeting held in mid-March that they could see progress in academic areas for some students who had been using the tutoring service regularly; they further noted a more productive use of time for the detention/in-school suspension and credit recovery class.

In addition to the academic support provided through Legacy and ASH partnering with the organization that provides tutoring for students during and after school, Legacy also partners with another local organization that provides academic support and mentorship to student-

athletes in the area. This organization has three full-time staff members on campus in order to provide direct support to Legacy athletes, both during and after school. Legacy is known for its strong athletics. The purpose of partnering with a separate academic support service that works exclusively with student-athletes is to make sure that student-athletes are supported both on and off the courts and field. The staff members who work directly with the student-athletes through this particular program also serve as coaches and mentors to the students. Many of the student-athletes I spoke with during my time at Legacy mentioned the benefits of having this program available to them, that their participation keeps them focused on their academics, pushes them to think about athletics beyond high school and into college, and requires them not only to think about their academic progress but also have a vested interest in the academic progress of their teammates and fellow athletes. Therefore, even in a school that attracts students looking to progress athletically, Legacy seeks to build within them a mentality of being scholar-athletes, not just athletes.

### **Concurrent Enrollment Program**

Another one of Legacy's academic efforts that builds upon the full-service model's notion of partnerships is their concurrent enrollment program with the local community colleges. This program provides college courses to be taught by community college instructors on Legacy's campus that can be taken toward fulfilling high school requirements and earning college credit. For the past school year, Legacy, in partnership with the community colleges, offered a variety of concurrent enrollment classes per semester to meet and pique the various interests and needs of students.

The reality of many Legacy High School students is that they may be the first in their families to have exposure and access to college opportunities. Having the availability of a

concurrent enrollment program allows them the opportunity to be exposed to the rigors of collegiate-level academics while still receiving the more hands-on support in their high school that might not otherwise be available to them on a college campus. Additionally, recognizing that all students are not on the trajectory for attending a 2- or 4-year college or university, the school leadership is looking to expand the concurrent enrollment program to allow students to earn certificates in workforce trades such as barber and cosmetology services and auto mechanics.

**STEAM enrichment and exposure.** As described in chapter 4, Legacy High School is located in an area that has largely been isolated from opportunity. To combat this reality and expose the students who attend schools in this area to enriching opportunities, Legacy's school district has designated the schools in the region as a STEAM-focused school network. With this focus, the schools offer both curricular and co-curricular classes and activities that allow students to explore their STEAM interests and strengths while gaining exposure to future career paths in the field. Many Legacy High School students have expressed interests and talents in STEAM fields such as computer science, audio engineering, journalism, and dance and music performance, but the availability to tap into these interests is often not available to students with their real-life circumstances. "Paradoxically, although many of the most troubled neighborhoods are located in metropolitan centers of great wealth and resources, access to the alluring educational and career resources of the city has been all but blocked for most students in high-poverty, urban high-schools" (National Research Council Institute of Medicine, 2004, p. 15).

**Industry partnerships.** As a way to counteract this reality and increase students' exposure, Legacy strategically aligns partnerships with industry organizations in order to provide scholarly and purposeful opportunities to prepare students for both college and careers. Through these industry partnerships, Legacy is able to offer its students non-

traditional hands-on learning experiences (at no additional cost to either the school or the student) that provide enriching curricular and co-curricular opportunities. Not only do these opportunities provide academic knowledge, but they also provide students with productive activities that are positive alternatives to some of the unsupervised or non-controlled activities that are common for Legacy students to partake in. Over the last year, Legacy has established industry partnerships with multiple national and regional corporations<sup>52</sup> that have made economic, social, and cultural capital investments into the school.

One example of Legacy's industry partnerships is with a multinational technology company. This company has committed to investing 2.5 million dollars over the next five years (beginning in 2015) to pilot a computer-science scholars program at Legacy (this opportunity has only been offered to one other school). This program aims to send over 500 students (between the two schools) on to study computer science in college with a focused target on minority and female students—student groups that have been underrepresented in STEM fields. This industry partner is not simply giving money to the school to expand its already existing computer science program, but it provides the school with field experts to help develop curriculum, provide teachers with professional development opportunities, and enhance the school's technology equipment. The investments made by this corporation not only will directly impact the students who pilot this program but also will support all students by increasing the knowledge capacity of the school's teachers, thus making exposure to STEM-related fields and career opportunities more accessible to the Legacy High School population.

Legacy High School continues to tap into both national and regional organizations to enhance the learning exposure and opportunities made available to its students. A key commonality among research that supports the full-service community school model, as well as

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<sup>52</sup> The name of the corporations cannot be disclosed to maintain anonymity of the research site.

strategic partnerships between schools and non-traditional school affiliates, is that schools alone cannot fully serve students. Recognizing this, Legacy High School continues to make strategic partnerships a common practice to supplement and enhance the educational experiences at their school. Not only do these experiences increase Legacy students' exposure to fields and opportunities that otherwise might be unavailable to them, but they also help students gain a sense of self-efficacy and esteem. For example, in an interview one junior student, Keyonna, explained to me that she did not have any plans for the summer. Although she was interested in architecture, she had never met an architect or even know what college classes she should take to pursue the field. She was concerned that her dream of being an architect would never become a reality. She shared with me that one of her teachers was able to help her get a summer internship with the Department of Architecture. While she was excited about the internship opportunity, she seemed most excited to share with me that in order to prepare for the internship, the teacher helped her with her build a resume, "I actually have one now!" Keyonna exclaimed.

**Community teachers.** Another way that Legacy High School's of full-service community school structure influences the academic areas of students' lives is through the school's creativity in tapping into community resources to provide non-traditional learning opportunities for students. One thing that many Legacy teachers do is recruit people from their personal social and professional networks to come to the school to share academic and social lessons with students. These visiting scholars and teachers allow Legacy the ability to supplement student learning by providing non-traditional opportunities to engage students. Many of these learning opportunities would not be possible if teachers only depended on the resources immediately available to them within the school. One example of this was evident in the school's music department.

Legacy's instrumental music department is under-resourced. The school has a very scarce selection of instruments—there is a set of snare drums, about a dozen hand drums, and a few other percussion instruments; there is very little available in terms of horns or string instruments. However, to supplement this scarcity, the music teacher would bring in a community guest on one day every other week to teach the students a lesson from their area of musical expertise. One week, the musical guest was a local native who had grown up very close to the school and had a similar background to the students in the class. This teacher brought with him various types of instruments. He explained to the students the origins of the equipment and showed different techniques to use them. He allowed a few of the students the opportunity to play his own instruments, while the rest of the class accompanied on either the school drums or by tapping on their desks with their hands.

One of the things that stood out to me most about this particular visiting teacher was that his lesson extended beyond music. Even during his short time in the classroom, the teacher was able to relate to the students. Because of his ability to relate to them, not only was he able to teach them a music lesson, but he also used his time to provide them with some vital life lessons. Even when some of the students were disruptive, he used the disruption to offer discipline and redirection. The visiting musician shared with students the importance of respect for people who take the time to teach them something new, as well as reminded them that he was from the same community and similar circumstances like many of the students in the room. While he did not talk down to any of the students, he did use himself as an example that hard work and focus could be the recipe to escaping their realities and having a life that they have only imagined.

Overall, in its functioning as a full-service community school, Legacy High School influences the academic aspects of students' lives by exposing them to unique learning resources

and opportunities. In isolation, Legacy High School has a small staff, high turnover rates, and limited resources to provide its students with all the tools, resources, supports, and opportunities necessary for the best possible academic experience. However, because of Legacy's partnership with ASH, monetary and educational support from private corporations, and its faculty tapping into networks and pools of talent and resources, Legacy is able to provide its students with robust and enriching learning experiences that might not otherwise be accessible to them.

**Research Question 2: What attributes of the full-service community school model are reflected in Legacy High School's practices around supporting students' non-academic needs and development?**

The learning and development opportunities at Legacy High School extend far beyond academics. In fact, some of the most compelling findings of this study are centered on the multiple aspects of non-academic learning and student development that were present at the school. At Legacy, faculty and staff work to use nearly every student experience, whether positive or negative, as an opportunity for growth and learning. The findings in this study revealed that students at Legacy experience a great deal of trauma in their personal lives. Therefore Legacy's use of the full-service community school model provides the school with the necessary resources and human supports to help students address the social issues they face in order to successfully navigate school. In addition to being able to provide them with resources, Legacy also strategically uses community partnerships to provide students with social experiences to help them broaden their scope of possibility.

**Physical and Mental Health Supports**

**The school-based health clinic.** One way that Legacy's functioning as a full-service community school model meets this need is through its extensive provision of physical and mental health services. Through community partnerships, Legacy has an on-site health clinic

that provides limited physical health services but extensive mental health services. Given the high demand for mental health support among Legacy's student population, it is advantageous to the school that some of their mental health professionals are provided through the local children's hospital, the county's health department, and other partner agencies. Being able to support these school clinicians, without the fiscal burden falling solely on the school, means the school is able to provide more possible resources for mental health to best meet students' mental healthcare needs.

In addition to the benefit of the school collaborating with partner agencies to alleviate the fiscal burden of having at least five mental health specialists on campus, it is also noteworthy that providing these specialists through partner agencies, rather than full-time district employees, allows the school a level of autonomy in hiring who they believe will best align with the needs of the students. Because of this autonomy in specialist placement, Legacy has been able to employ two mental health specialists who live in the same community as many of the students and are also Legacy alumni. Because of this, these specialists are uniquely situated to understand the students' experiences and life context, which leads to better servicing the students.

Unfortunately, however, the physical health resources in Legacy's school-based health clinic are significantly limited. When students discussed the services provided to them at the health clinic, they only referred to sports physicals as one of the physical health services provided to them. It was explained to me that earlier in the health clinic's existence there was a physician at the clinic at least three days a week. However, there is currently no physician there on a regular basis. While there, the school offered physical health resources such as STI screening and eye exams through third-party entities that only came to campus for one day,



but these were not fixed aspects of the health center. Especially coupled with the school nurse shortage that plagues schools across the country, the health-based clinic on Legacy's campus not having a full-time physical health provider has the potential to leave many student health issues unaddressed.

**Coordination of Services Team (COST).** Although the coordination of services team is not unique to the full-service community school model, the way that it is utilized at Legacy strengthens the school's function as a full-service community school. At Legacy, COST consists of the school principal, mental health clinicians and case managers, the school-site community school's manager, and school assistant principal. In addition to the main members of the coordination of services team, COST also partners with parent liaisons and the school safety officers.

Because the full-service community school model informs school practices with a child-centered wraparound approach, the COS Team at Legacy works to ensure the most productive and sustainable supports and interventions are being provided for the students they serve by utilizing the various resources on campus and non-traditional intervention measures.

**Self-discovery and exposure.** Aside from the physical and mental health services that are provided to Legacy students, the school's functioning as a full-service community school also provides students with opportunities to support self-discovery and exposure to social and cultural capital. Many of the opportunities available at Legacy are made possible through strategic partnerships with organizations and individuals. Prior to coming to Legacy, many students had not had the privilege and opportunity to travel more than 30 miles away from their home. The city that they live in is literally one public transportation ride across the bridge into one of the country's most profitable and wealthy cities—however, many Legacy students

have never been there. Recognizing that Legacy students have limited access to exposure to various opportunities and forms of social and cultural capital, the school works to strategically partner with community organizations and corporations to provide students with exposure to opportunities that will expand their discovery of their social identities.

Some of the ways that Legacy has done this is through creating spaces on campus such as an audio-visual production lab that allows some students to hone their artistic talents and hobbies, opening a community garden to provide students with opportunities to learn about food nutrition and preparation, and taking students on cultural field trips to expose them to various parts of the world. One of the most enriching opportunities that Legacy High School was able to provide during my time there was to take nearly two dozen students on a two-week cultural excursion to South Africa at no cost to the students. There was no district or school funding provided for the trip. However, through the determination and efforts of Ms. C, community partners were engaged and supported the funding of this trip. Some of the students who went on the trip had never been out of the state, let alone the country, but through community partnership efforts were able to have a life-changing two-week experience in South Africa. Once they returned, one of the students described the trip as “transformative.” Another student explained that her experience in South Africa opened her mind to so many things about different cultures, such as food, people, language, etc. This trip expanded students’ access to social and cultural capital in invaluable ways.

**Research Question 3: What attributes of the full-service community school model are reflected in Legacy High School’s culture and climate?**

School culture is defined as the common set of expectations and guidelines that members of a group establish and abide by in order to maintain good standing with others in their group (Gruenert, 2008). Similarly, school climate is described as the overall attitude and

collective morale of a group (Gruenert, 2008). One of the most compelling aspects of Legacy High School is the school's culture and climate. Despite Legacy High School's less than favorable reputation (largely shaped by stereotypes and uninformed assumptions), the school climate is positive, warm, and rooted in community. Additionally, Legacy's school culture is rooted in both academic and social excellence and community collaboration.

**Legacy's school culture.** In all that Legacy does and offers, they are very intentional about building a school culture that promotes college, career, and community readiness. One of the ways that Legacy's functioning as a full-service community school influences the school's culture is through the provision of creating opportunities through partnerships to help them attain the goal. Any school can have a culture of college, career, and community readiness, but unless a school is providing students with the tools necessary to achieve those goals, it is nothing but a hope and a dream. However, Legacy realizes that in order to achieve and implement their desired school culture, opportunities have to be made available with the support of faculty and staff that will allow students to do so.

Some of the ways in which Legacy High School's functioning as a full-service community school aids in shaping the school culture is through the provision of a wide array of academic and career opportunities. Despite a reputation of being a school that lacks academic rigor and primarily serves students who do not have the desire or ability to continue on to be productive in college and careers, Legacy continues to partner with organizations that expose students to high-level college and career options. Too often, youth from high-needs areas, low-income backgrounds, and troubled realities are made to believe that they cannot achieve success in higher education or career settings and are thus tracked accordingly. However, Legacy High School aims to do the exact opposite. As evident in their school

culture, they seek to instill in their students the belief that with hard work and access anything is possible, and thus they use creative ways to provide them with access to the networks, resources, and experiences that they need. A few specific examples of how Legacy does this were described earlier in this chapter: they offer internship opportunities with major corporations and exposure to rigorous college curriculums. Additionally, by instilling in students the mindset of excellence, Legacy High School nurtures empowered community leaders who are capable of identifying their power, honing in on their talents and skills, and being the authors of their own destiny who strive to give back to their communities in positive ways.

**Legacy's school climate.** The full-service community school model has an indirect influence on the school's climate. Even without the designation of a full-service community school, Legacy's school climate is rooted in a community-relation mindset. Despite a lot of the trauma, behavioral issues, and other social disruptions that occur in the school setting, Legacy continues to remain grounded in community. The theme "Legacy Fam," as described in the previous chapter, sheds light on how the community spirit of Legacy shapes the school climate.

One specific example of how the full-service community school model helps to shape the school climate is through the use of restorative justice. Legacy High School uses restorative justice practices to minimize suspensions and referrals. The goal of the minimization is not just to bring the school's overall discipline record down but to redirect the life trajectory that is all too common for youth with backgrounds like those experienced at Legacy. Legacy's teachers and leadership are aware of the long-term consequences that can result from their students receiving harsh punishments and lengthy discipline files or spending too much time out of school and

unsupervised due to suspension and expulsion, so they work to give the students a better shot. Restorative justice interventions begin in the hallways of Legacy High School. The fact that school seeks to address discipline and correction in a restorative way that is dependent on close relationships helps aid the school in sustaining a positive climate.

**Research Question 4: How is Legacy High School's functioning as a full-service community school reflected in its integrated relations with the larger community?**

**Programming and resources.** Through this study, I found that Legacy High School has a much stronger connection with its immediate school community (i.e., parents, alumni, active Legacy stakeholders, etc.) than it does with the regional community within which it exists. For parents of its students, Legacy provides many resources and services not only to help parents meet the needs of their child[ren] but also simply to provide parents with a host of individual supports. In our interview, one parent told me how she uses and finds invaluable the resources made available to her through her child's school.

*If I go into a school, and you're telling me you are a full-service community school, what services can you provide for me? How can I benefit? I have gone to a tenant rights workshop...because I was having some issues with my landlord...that workshop that I attended that was at the school, I was able to get my situation helped... I was having some problems and they helped me. Every time I have been in a situation where I needed help or support, I've gone to the administrators, or someone pointing me in the direction that I can get help... I have really had a good experience...You guys are here for a reason, and so, I'm going to utilize every program you all have for me, whether I can benefit from it or not, even if it's redundant. I'm going to sit through it, because you learn something new every day. I don't mind telling my story, because my story can probably help someone else.*

This particular workshop was held at her daughter's middle school—which is one of the district's schools that feed into Legacy High School. Although this particular workshop was not offered by Legacy, it is still an example of the types of services and resources that Legacy provides to its parents. Another example is small group activities on topics such as banking and employment application preparation. Not all of these opportunities were provided through community partnerships; some of them were workshops led by school staff and other parents.

In addition to school parent programs and resources, some other ways in which Legacy contributes to the larger community are through various outreach and community service initiatives. One of these outreach initiatives is “The Princess Project,” which is run by the school's parent coordinator. This is a program where the school collects new and gently used formal and semi-formal attire for young men and women. Before prom, Legacy students and other students throughout the district are invited to come and choose free clothes and accessories for prom. Another outreach initiative that Legacy hosts in order to engage the larger community is a holiday toy and food drive where the Legacy school community collects and donates food and toys to less fortunate families during the winter holiday season.

Legacy High School has a very influential relationship with the Legacy school community. The school takes great care in engaging with this community and keeping them active in the daily life of Legacy High School. Additionally, the school community remains active in school programs and activities and lends its supports to the overall school experience.

**Growing engagement with regional community.** Although community engagement between Legacy High and the immediate school community is high, connection with the surrounding regional community is currently limited. The school aims to increase its presence. Not only is Legacy's school leadership working to tap into the current business and assets that

are available in the surrounding community, but they continuously work to broaden their scope of learning with different opportunities for students. As Legacy continues to work through its transformation process, the school is rebranding. Their rebranding efforts attempt to redefine outsiders' image of Legacy in the hope to encourage people in the community to want to partner with, work at, or contribute to the school in any other way.

### **Summary of Research Questions**

Although many of the opportunities that are made available to Legacy students are not direct results of the school being a full-service community school, the fact that these opportunities are made possible through community partnerships speaks to the full-service community school practices in at Legacy. However, it should be noted that many of the programs and resources that are available at the school, through community partnerships, are in place by faculty, staff, and other stakeholders tapping into their personal resources and social networks, and not implemented as way to be in compliance with being a full-service community school. Therefore, many of these offerings are the results of people at Legacy, not policies. Based on my gained understanding of Legacy's school culture, the provisions, support, and opportunities provided at Legacy through the use of the full-service community school model only supplement the already community centered and wraparound focused practices that were already in place. One teacher described to me what makes Legacy different than other school schools. She said, *"We're different, because we really do try and take things to an individual level, even when it's incredibly frustrating. The adults on this campus are some of the most patient people in the world. It's unbelievable."*

### **Limitations**

Unfortunately, many participants were unable to define a community school by name. Because of this, it was difficult to fully determine how the school's model actually impacted

different research question areas. Most teachers were able to define it, but some students and parents were not able to—even though they were active in the school. Even when some participants were able to offer a definition, most had a limited understanding of the model aside from the school having a health clinic. When I asked one student what he understood the full-service community school to be, he responded, “Does it mean that the community runs the school?”

Because some people do not know the full extent to which their school functions as a full-service community school, their knowledge of the resources available to them may be limited, which makes the resources not as effective as possible. Legacy High School currently has more than 20 community partners with which they work closely to supplement learning and provide its students, families, and communities with necessary resources. However, even though they are doing well at utilizing community partnerships to supplement what their school can offer, there is still room (as with anything) for improvement. One way to improve would be through better branding and communication about the school’s use of the full-service community school model and creating a tracking system for how the resources are being used.

Another limitation of this study is the inability to distinguish between what happens in the school through natural order and what happens as a direct product of the full-service community school infrastructure. For example, the fourth research question of this study focused on the community school’s influence on the larger community. Because the school has a history of high community engagement, it is impossible to determine (although assumptions can be made) whether the supports that parents and community members report are an innate part of the school climate or if they are indeed an outcome of the full-service community school model—or



both. Understanding the limitations of the study's findings provides a sounder base on which to make policy recommendations.

A methodological limitation of this study was its sole dependence on qualitative data to understand and assess the functioning of the full-service community school model at the research site. While ethnography did indeed prove to be useful in better understanding the school, elements of a mixed methods approach to data collection would have been beneficial for understanding how elements of the full-service community school model influenced Legacy's operations. Additionally, in order to better understand how Legacy's functioning as a full-service community school influences various aspects of student experiences and the school's culture, having quantitative data to track and assess usage of the school's FSCS attributes would have made these elements and their influence more distinct.

### **Policy Recommendations**

Conducting this study shed light on what is necessary for the full-service community school model to reach its intended goals of (1) providing high-needs students with a network of supports to close achievement and opportunity gaps and increase student learning and development and (2) serving as a hub of resources for the local community. The recommendations offered in this section are based both on what Legacy High School (in its functioning as a full-service community school) was doing significantly well and on identified areas of growth for how Legacy's community school model could be improved. Additionally, while these policy recommendations are offered through the lens of Legacy High School, they can also generally be considered in the implementation of any full-service community school.

#### **Recommendation 1: The full-service community school model must be embedded in the identity of the school.**

In order for the full-service community school model to operate to its fullest potential,

the model and its purpose must be embedded in the overall identity of the school. When a school's identity embodies the full-service community school model, the entire school, community, and its partners can be actively involved in the implementation and success of the program. Additionally, the more a school is universally aware of, and identifies as, a community school, the more that the school model's beneficiaries can recognize how the different services offered work in tandem rather than as individual entities in order to address larger issues.

Areas of necessary growth for Legacy High School in its operation as a full-service community school are identity, branding, and awareness. While many individuals who are directly involved with Legacy High School had a basic understanding of what a full-service community school was, some did not. Even for those who did have at least minimal understanding of the model, there was no evidence of a universal definition that indicated what the full-service community school meant specifically at and for Legacy High School. Additionally, while some individuals recognized the different elements of the FSCS model within the school, they often could not identify how the various elements of the model worked together. Without a site-specific definition, it is difficult for the school's stakeholders, especially students and parents, to be aware of all of the possible resources, tools, and opportunities available to them.

Another vital element of having the full-service community school model designation embedded into the school's identity is to call attention to the secondary element of the FSCS model—a hub of resources for the community. None of the Legacy High School affiliates who were minimally aware of the purpose of a full-service community school identified the school model's outward mission of being a place where students and families could come for

resources as well as a place for the surrounding community to come for resources and services. Even in the areas where Legacy High School was identified as a full-service community school, the identification did not name the school as a resource for the larger community. This finding implies that unless the full-service community school identifies as a full-service community school that is a resource to the surrounding community, their actions and practices will not expand beyond the immediate school community into the larger school community.

Many of the areas of growth for Legacy High School as a full-service community school come from issues around not having a universally embedded identity as a FSCS. Because much of the school community was not fully aware of what a full-service community school was, and those who were aware had varying understandings, many participants were not aware that the varying FSCS components available to them were purposed for more holistic outcomes.

A few ways to alleviate the gap in understanding what the full-service community school is, how it operates at the particular school site, and how one can benefit from it, school leaders can:

- Include the full-service community school model designation in the schools name, mission, vision, etc.
- Create a unified definition for what being an FSCS means for and at each particular school location.
- When communicating with student, parents, community members, etc. about programs and/or resources that are available as a product of the FCSM, often or always include an informational write-up about the what a full-service community school is and what it means for the particular school site.

- Have informational open houses specifically on the community partnerships, programs, and resources provided through the full service community school structure.
- As leaders and educators of a full-service community school, continuously speak with teachers, students, parents, service providers, and community members about the purposes of the full-service community school at large, and how each interconnected piece of the model works together to achieve those larger goals.

**Recommendation 2: Provide administrator and teachers with support services**

The full-service community school model sets out to mitigate social and ecological hardships that often negatively impact the quality of school and life experiences of underserved and high-needs students and communities. As a result, the likelihood of leaders, faculty, and staff in such schools being exposed to high levels of stress and trauma is high. The inordinate rates of trauma exposure could potentially lead to faculty/staff burnout and turnover. Because of this, I recommend that any school that seeks to implement the full-service community school model make provisions for school administrators and teachers to receive support services tailored to their unique experiences. A few of these recommended supports are professional development unique to the FSCS model and access to physical and mental health services.

**Professional development.** Professional development for faculty and staff of the school community, as well as for the school’s community partners, is vital. While being able to provide a service is useful, the most productive outcomes of the service happen when all partners know to provide them effectively. As mentioned above in the first recommendation, all stakeholders within the FSCS organization must be fully aware of the overall purpose of the FSCS and why it is present in their particular school. In addition to this, each partner should be well versed on their particular role in the full-service community school infrastructure and how their role speaks to the school’s larger purpose.

Just as schools provide regular professional development (PD) opportunities on curriculum, special programs, and discipline policies, a full-service community school could benefit from PD opportunities year-round, constantly training faculty, staff, and partners on the purpose of the full-service community school model and how the various services and resources provided are intended to work together to best meet the needs of students. Additionally, these professional development experiences could serve as a way to make formative assessments about how the services, resources, and partnerships are used together. Throughout professional development opportunities that are provided, the FSCS stakeholders can make sure that the school's intended goals are being met and readjust accordingly.

**Access to physical and mental health services.** As the findings from this study indicated, Legacy High School students face a great deal of trauma and bring those realities to school with them. Most often teachers and school leaders are the first point of contact with students. Therefore, when students are acting in response to their own traumatic experiences, they project those stresses onto the people who seek to serve them. Regrettably, while the students and families within the FSCS are provided with human and social supports to alleviate the negative effects of life, school faculty and staff are often not provided with the same.

The need for access to physical and mental health services for FSCS leaders and educators became apparent while at Legacy High School. Legacy High School's principal was very committed to her school, her students, and the overall success of the school's programmatic endeavors. Unfortunately, however, in the middle of her third year<sup>53</sup> she had to resign from her position as principal because of extreme stress-induced health concerns. When she showed up to school on a daily basis, she had to tend to the social and emotional needs of her students in

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<sup>53</sup> This was the 2015-2016 school year. This is a finding that developed after the official data collection period for this study.

addition to the host of administrative duties she had to oversee. She supported her students not only at school but also outside of traditional school hours, such as at their homes and in the hospital. Unfortunately, there were no on-site resources readily available to provide her (or other adults who work in the school) the space or tools necessary to find recourse from the secondhand trauma faced. This shared example is only one of many where the impacts of students' realities have taken a toll on adults' lives.

An educator, especially those who work with populations exposed to high trauma, cannot fully support students if they too are not fully supported. Providing teachers and other school personnel with regular access to mental, physical, and social supports can prove beneficial in the way they are able to serve their young people. Having these supports in place could potentially mitigate teacher burnout and turnover in high-needs schools and areas. Additionally, lesser rates of teacher turnover can lend to less disruption of learning, more stable school environments, and overall better school experiences for students.

### **Recommendation 3: Recruitment of Highly Effective School Leaders and Teachers**

Most recent education policy trends (i.e., No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top) have emphasized a focus on schools being full of highly qualified teachers. According to NCLB, in order to be deemed highly qualified, a “teachers must have: 1) a bachelor's degree, 2) full state certification or licensure, and 3) prove that they know each subject they teach.” Additionally, the Act describes a host of other ways a teacher can be considered highly qualified. However, all of the measures used focus on subject-matter competency. While competency is indeed important, it limits other areas that should be considered in assessing teacher quality. Nothing in standard school policies acknowledges the social, emotional, or cultural competence of teachers in their qualifications.

During an informal conversation with one of the human resources personnel of Legacy High School's school district regarding the recruitment of teachers for the district, she warned the group not to confuse "highly qualified" with "highly effective" teachers. She argued that any teacher could be credentialed to teach and/or have a plethora of teaching experience. However, if they could not identify with the unique needs of the students whom they sought to serve, their effectiveness would be minimal. Instead, she urged schools to focus on bringing teachers into their schools who could really relate to the students. In schools with a unique school culture dynamic like Legacy High School, the student and community population also have very unique experiences and needs. In order to really be successful there, it took people who could relate and possessed a strong desire to be in that setting. Therefore, the adults who are employed there should not only be competent in their content areas but also have the cultural competence and commitment to work with such populations. The human resource representative of Legacy's school district suggested that schools like Legacy should be open to recruiting teachers who are passionate about teaching and truly and genuinely care about the student population—and all they bring with them—at that specific school site. She said, "If they can love and truly care about seeing our kids succeed, we want them! *We* will make them good teachers."

Ms. Randall, Legacy's principal, described Legacy in a very interesting way during a conversation. She said, "There are suburban schools, there are urban schools, and then there are 'hood'<sup>54</sup> schools...Legacy is a 'hood' school." She made this statement in reference to the educational "experts" who had visited the school and a few people who candidly volunteered in an interview with her that they had experience working in urban areas. Ms. Randall did not use the term "hood" to demean her school; instead she meant it as a way to describe unique and

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<sup>54</sup> "Hood" is a slang term often used to describe troubled and "undesirable" neighborhoods.

undesirable hardships that Legacy students face and bring with them to school on a daily basis. Furthermore, she made this statement to highlight the importance for people who wanted to work in or be a part of the school community to understand that what takes place at Legacy is unique. She also highlighted that unless an educator had the ability and genuine desire to build trust and be relational with Legacy students, they would not only have a difficult time in the space but also be a disservice to the students. Even for a person who has experience working with Black and Brown youth, Randall urged that there is a higher level of cultural competence necessary to fully be able to relate to and address the needs of Legacy's students. Principal Randall's statement made it very clear that she was protective of the students, families, and community that she serves and recognized that not just anyone with credentials—or even urban school experience—could make a positive impact on the students. Only when they fully understood and cared for Legacy students and could nurture all that they carry with them could they be effective educators to the students and in the school. The work of Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) and Delpit (2006) highlight the critical importance of educators being able to relate to, respect, and elevate the non-Eurocentric norms and cultures of students of color. Additionally, they emphasize the negative impact and danger to the well-being of children when this is not the case.

Two ways to help ensure that highly effective educators are being employed within a full-service community school organization is by (1) hiring from within the school community and (2) utilizing school and community engagement throughout the hiring process. Hiring school personnel from within the school community increases the likelihood of having adults in the school who can relate to students on a more holistic level. An educator has the potential to more effectively reach and meet the needs of the students when they have the awareness of what the student experiences both in and out of school as well as the ability to relate on more personal and



cultural levels. Additionally, as found at Legacy, students are more likely to trust the adults in their school when their teachers and school staff have similar backgrounds as them. When trust among teachers and students in a school exists, stronger communication and engagement bonds can be built.

Secondly, including school-community engagement in hiring can also prove beneficial. In addition to the standard human resources protocol of vetting potential candidates to work at a school, giving the school community (i.e., students, parents, teachers, staff, alumni, etc.) the opportunity to meet, vet, and interview candidates allows a different element of screening to take place. When all stakeholders at the school are engaged in hiring FSCS personnel, hiring decisions can be more strategically based on how an individual will holistically fit into the social and cultural fabrics of the school. Staff, students, and parents will be able to assess a candidate based on the candidate's alignment with the school's vision and mission and ability to effectively engage and contribute within the school community. School-community engagement within the hiring process was a practice that was sometimes used at Legacy (and within Legacy's school district). Making this a standard practice can increase the likelihood that schools have personnel in place who are most effective for their particular school's programmatic needs.

#### **Recommendation 4: Regular (re)evaluation of full-service community school program**

The fourth recommendation offered through this study is regular evaluation and re-evaluation of the full-service community school operation. Like any educational praxis, regular evaluation allows the organization to assess the progress and productivity of its functioning. Because the full-service community school model seeks to address particular student, family, and community needs, FSCS administration must ensure that the school's offerings are always aligned with the needs of its intended beneficiaries. Thus, as trends in needs and circumstances

change, so should the school's partnerships and offerings. An additional part of evaluating and measuring the organization's effectiveness is also making sure that all members of the organizational structure are in alignment with the school's purpose and overall goals of its specific site. The evaluation of the full-service community school model can be done in a variety of ways:

- Tracking user trends of the various supports and services and comparing user trends to user outcomes.
- Gathering student, parent, community, and partner feedback through regular evaluations.
- Regularly assessing potential partnership opportunities and ensuring that the school is tapping into all potential partners and service providers to provide the resources and opportunities necessary for the population.

**Recommendation 5: Ethnography and narrative gathering as research methodologies to inform education policy.**

Decision-making processes that inform education and public policy are too often created by individuals who have no direct connection with the communities they seek to serve. Because of this disconnect, the policy "solutions" that are put in place often do not fully meet the community's needs. The final policy recommendation derived from this study is the use of ethnography and narrative gathering as methodologies to inform education policy. Given the uniqueness of the full-service community school model to provide services distinctly tailored to the school and community needs, ethnographic research to gain a more authentic and intimate understanding of the community is necessary. By spending quality time inside a school community and gathering narratives from members within that community, policy makers can

better inform school policies and practices by having a clearer understanding of what needs actually have to be met.

The use of narratives to inform policies, especially those that seek to support historically marginalized groups, not only better informs the policy recommended but also serves to empower the community. As found in this study, the Legacy High School community often felt as if organizational changes were being made to them rather than with them. Because of this, the Legacy community members have developed a sense of skepticism and do not feel that they have full control over their own destiny with regard to the school community. However, when the communities of focus are included in the decision-making processes that directly impact them, they are potentially positioned to feel a stronger sense of control over what takes place in their communities and lives. As found in this research, gathering narratives around the organizational and programmatic implementation of the full-service community school model not only seemed to serve as a cathartic relief to the school community but also allowed for their voices to be elevated as this research informs future practices within their school model.

### **Future Research**

Conducting this ethnographic intrinsic case study to learn more about the implications of the full-service community school model at Legacy High School exposed more questions and thus possibilities for future research. One of the first tasks of future research would be to conduct a program evaluation of Legacy's full-service community school model to more fully assess how the full-service community school model impacts students. Second, a cross-site comparison study of multiple full-service community school programs could be conducted in order to better understand and assess impacts and influences of the full-service community school model on various aspects of students' lives within different environments. Together, the evaluation findings and cross-site analysis findings could then be used to better tailor the school's full-

service community school model and improve upon the services available to better meet the needs of students, families, and communities.

A second element of future research that this study revealed is related to secondhand trauma experienced by school faculty and staff. This study at Legacy brought to my attention that much research is dedicated to studying the impacts of stress and trauma on students. However, literature rarely if ever discusses the effects of student trauma on the adults that work with them. This realization urged me to want to study this issue. Understanding how adults in schools are impacted by trauma and stresses of the students they support can have various implications. First, it can allow school human resource personnel insight into better supporting teachers, and second, it can lead to better understanding teacher performance and quality. Additionally, understanding this correlation could help full-service community school organizations, when creating resource partnerships, to strategically consider how the school seeks to meet the needs of not only its students but also its staff.

Finally, another area of future research that could directly expand upon this particular project would be to partner with Legacy High School in writing their counter narrative. While this study was designed with the intention of focusing on the full-service community school model, I could not solely focus on the model without seeing all of Legacy's raw and authentic self. This close encounter with Legacy High School reminded me of schools highlighted by scholars in books such as James Anderson's *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*, Gerald Grant's *The World We Created at Hamilton High*, and Vanessa Siddle Walker's *Their Highest Potential* (1996). Each of these books contributes to the dismantling of the master narrative around Blacks' limited ability and desire for educational achievement. Further, the stories capture the narrative

of African Americans' educational attainment efforts by defying odds through creating schools that served their communities and met their particular needs.

### **Conclusion**

Through its implementation at Legacy High School, the full-service community school model proves to be a beneficial and advantageous school organizational model. However, like any school praxis, the operations of the full-service community school model must be strategically implemented in order to be most beneficial. As school leaders and practitioners utilize more holistic approaches to educating and serving children, their families, and their communities, it is important that they consider the unique contexts within which their school and their students exist. Additionally, stakeholder buy-in is key to a full-service community school's success. Each part of the full-service community school model serves as a key component in the organization's functioning. Gathered from this study, some of the key elements that make a full-service community school work well are support and buy-in from all key stakeholders (i.e., district-level leadership, community and corporate partners, school leadership, teachers, parents, students, alumni, etc.), embedding the full-service model in the school's identity, increased sustainability to support not only students, families, and communities but also staff members, and social supports that are uniquely tailored to the specific needs of the school. Unless these elements are in place, the full-service community school model will not perform and/or provide at its fullest potential.

### **Final Thoughts**

Although there is indeed room for improvement in Legacy High School's full-service community school model, the school is doing a great job of strategically creating and using partnerships with community organizations to tap into the most resources possible. Although

Legacy continues to struggle with federal- and state-assessed academic performance, the improvements that have been made over the years have led to a shift in the district's and public's perception of the school. School faculty members have suggested that the changed organizational and operational structure that incorporates elements of the full-service community school model has resulted in improvements in the school. As of the 2014-2015 school year, Legacy had more than 20 community partners whom they worked closely with to supplement the learning and development that takes place and to be able to provide its students, families, and communities with the resources necessary to thrive.

Through this research, I hope that I was able to shed light on the usefulness of and need to implement the full-service community school model in more challenged schools throughout the nation. Research has proven that schools, especially those that serve students with high needs, cannot independently provide students with all of the resources and opportunities needed. The use of the full-service community school model allows schools to strategically and creatively find ways close the opportunity and achievement gaps that are based on disadvantage of affluence and access.

Finally, through this study of Legacy High School, I hope that I shone a positive light on one of the city's most misunderstood schools and communities. Throughout this study, I dug deep behind Legacy's surface and got "messily involved" so that I could best be able to (1) understand the Legacy High School community and (2) how this school's use of the full-service community school model worked to meet the needs of various aspects of students' lives. While I wholeheartedly understand that digging and exposing makes one—in this case Legacy High School—vulnerable to all who read this work, I hope more than anything that I have been able to authentically capture the story of this unique school and contribute to debunking the master

narrative of a struggling school and countering that with one of a school and community with a rich history and Legacy.

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<sup>55</sup> Please note that this is an abridged list of sources. Some references have been removed from this list to maintain anonymity of school site and participants. The author of this dissertation has full reference list on file.



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## Appendix A| Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

### UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research  
Office for the Protection of Research Subjects  
528 East Green Street  
Suite 203  
Champaign, IL 61820



August 27, 2014

William Trent  
Ed Organization and Leadership  
351 Education Bldg  
1310 S Sixth St  
M/C 708

RE: *Does it Really Take a Village? Examining the Influence of Wrap Around Services and Community Partnerships at High School*  
IRB Protocol Number: 15021

Dear Dr. Trent:

Your response to stipulations for the project entitled *Does it Really Take a Village? Examining the Influence of Wrap Around Services and Community Partnerships at High School* has satisfactorily addressed the concerns of the UIUC Institutional Review Board (IRB) and you are now free to proceed with the human subjects protocol. The UIUC IRB approved, by expedited review, the protocol as described in your IRB-1 application with stipulated changes. The expiration date for this protocol, IRB number 15021, is 08/26/2015. The risk designation applied to your project is *no more than minimal risk*. Certification of approval is available upon request.

Copies of the attached date-stamped consent form(s) must be used in obtaining informed consent. If there is a need to revise or alter the consent form(s), please submit the revised form(s) for IRB review, approval, and date-stamping prior to use.

Under applicable regulations, no changes to procedures involving human subjects may be made without prior IRB review and approval. The regulations also require that you promptly notify the IRB of any problems involving human subjects, including unanticipated side effects, adverse reactions, and any injuries or complications that arise during the project.

If you have any questions about the IRB process, or if you need assistance at any time, please feel free to contact me at the OPRS office, or visit our Web site at <http://www.irb.illinois.edu>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anita Balgopal".

Anita Balgopal, PhD  
Director, Office for the Protection of Research Subjects

Attachment(s)

c: Chanee Anderson

telephone (217) 333-2670 • fax (217) 333-0405 • email [IRB@illinois.edu](mailto:IRB@illinois.edu)

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<sup>56</sup> Please note that the title of the project was changed but the research elements and design remained the same.

## Appendix B| Interview Guides

### Interview Guide Students

1. For my records only, can you please state your name?
2. Please state your age, gender, racial identifier, and grade.
3. Can you please talk to me about your background? Your family? Who do you live with? Do you have siblings? If so, please tell me about them.
4. Do you live in the community? How long have you lived here? If you do not live here near the school, where do you live? Can you please tell me a little bit about your neighborhood?
5. What are some of the things that you do on the weekends? Who do you spend time with? Where do you go, and what do you do?
6. Before you came to school at [Legacy], what did you expect? Did you want to attend this school? What are your thoughts about the school now that you are here? Does [Legacy] offer everything that you expect from a school? What are those things? If it does not, what is it lacking that you would like?
7. How does attending [Legacy] make you feel? Do you like it? Do you dislike it?
8. Is [Legacy] the only high school that you have attended? If not what are some of the differences between this school and other schools that you have gone to?
9. Regardless of whether or not you attended another high school besides [Legacy], what do you think makes [Legacy] unique or different from other schools that you have or could have gone to?
10. Would you say that school is difficult or easy to you? What makes school this way for you? What are some of the things that help you combat difficulty? Are there people? Experiences? Etc.?
11. Can you talk to me a little bit about your academic performance? Your grades? Are you happy with them? What do you think can attribute to your or other students' academic performance?
12. What does the word "community" mean to you? What about the term "community-school"?
13. What is your understanding of a community school? Did you know that [Legacy] is a community school? Did you know what a community school was prior to attending [Legacy]?



14. How do your parents/guardian feel about you attending [Legacy]? Do they ever worry about you coming to school here? Why or Why not?
15. Tell me about the other students at [Legacy]. Who are your friends at school? Can you please tell me a little bit about them?
16. Tell me about the teachers and other people who work at your school. How do they make you feel? Who would you describe as a good teacher? What makes them good? What about a teacher that you don't think is good.
17. What do your friends who attend different schools say about your school?
18. I know that your school has a lot of resource—like a health center, community and youth center, and tutoring—do you use these resources? Why do you think these are here at your school? Do you find that having these things on campus is useful to students? Why? Do you think that it's important for all schools to offer things like this? Why or Why not?
19. Do you use the services and resources here? How about any of the other ones that I didn't mention. If you used them, can you please tell me about your experience with them? If you don't use them, can you tell me why you don't? Do any other members of your family utilize the services that [Legacy] offers?
20. Do you think that your parent/guardian might be interested in speaking with me? As I promised, no one will know what you and I have talked about, so if I speak with him or her, I will not share what you have told me. I would just like to get their perspective on [Legacy].... Is there a phone number or email for them that I may have, would you please give them my contact information and tell them that I would like to talk to them?

## **Interview Guide**

### **School Administrator**

1. Would you please share with me your age, gender, race, and your job title?
2. Can you please described to me your history of affiliation with [Legacy]?
3. What part of town do you live in? What motivated you to make that choice?
4. If you had the opportunity to live in the community surrounding [LEGACY] would you?
5. Can you please tell me about your professional background?
6. Would you say anything about your personal background may have influenced your professional path?
7. What do you think is necessary for students to be successful in school and in life?
8. What type of things do you think influences students' experiences at school?
9. Can you please tell me about the students here at [LEGACY]?
10. If you had to describe how [LEGACY] identifies itself, how would that be?
11. In your opinion, what makes [LEGACY] different from other schools?
12. How do people respond to you when you tell them you work at [Legacy]?
13. When you think about the word "community", what does that mean to you?
14. In a school context, what does community mean?
15. What do you understand a full-service community school to be?
16. [DISTRICT] considers itself a district of full-service community schools? Do you remember when this designation started?
17. How did schools respond to this new designation? Particularly, how did [Legacy] respond?
18. [Legacy] is considered a full-service community school, what does that mean to you?
19. Do you remember when [LEGACY] was first designated as full-service community school?

20. Do you believe that [LEGACY] identifies itself as a full-service community school?
21. What do you think is the reason for this level of identification?
22. Do you believe that [LEGACY] lives up to being a full-service community school?
23. In what ways is it excelling? In what ways could it improve?
24. What do you think [Legacy] accomplishes by being a full-service community school?
25. Can you please give me any insight you have on the health clinic here? What do you know about it?
26. Do you know when it was opened?
27. Do you know why it was opened?
28. What has been the school's response to the health clinic being on campus over time?
29. What are some of the challenges you face being an administrator at [Legacy]?
30. Do you believe that [LEGACY] being a full-service community school assists in facing those challenges? What about makes it more difficult?
31. In what ways do you engage the community with what is going on here at [Legacy]?
32. Why do you make these engagements?
33. Do you know anything about the school splitting into smaller schools in 2005? Can you tell me what you know, or understand about that split? What is your perspective?
34. If you had a magic wand and could change anything to make [Legacy] a better place for students to learn, and for people to work at, what would you change?

## **Interview Guide**

### **Teacher**

1. For my records only, can you please state your name?
2. Would you please share with me your age, gender, race, and your job title?
3. How long have you worked here at [Legacy]?
4. What part of town do you live in? What motivated you to make that choice?
5. If you had the opportunity to live in the community surrounding [Legacy], would you choose to live here?
6. Please tell me a little bit about your professional background?
7. Is there anything from your personal life, you would say influenced your professional path?
8. What do you believe influences student's experiences at school?
9. What does it take for them to be successful?
10. What do you believe is your personal role in assuring that students are successful?
11. What does the word community mean to you?
12. More specifically, what does community mean within a school context?
13. When someone says [Legacy] or [Legacy], what comes to mind for you?
14. Now, what about when you say [Legacy] to someone else... when you tell people that you teach at [LEGACY], how do they respond?
15. Did you request to teach at [Legacy], or were you assigned here? If you requested, what made you choose [LEGACY]? If you were assigned, what was your first thought?
16. Has your initial perception changed? If so, what changed it?
17. How did you feel after your first day? What did you do differently the next day?
18. Do you enjoy teaching at [Legacy]?

19. Please tell me about the students here at [Legacy].
20. Now can you please tell me about other teachers, faculty, and staff?
21. Aside from your “teacher hat”, what other hats do you find yourself wearing here at school?
22. How you ever worked with people outside of the school, to improve what you do at school?  
If so, how did it work out for you?
23. [DISTRICT] labels [Legacy] as a community-school. What does that mean to you?
24. In what ways does [LEGACY] live up to being a community school? In what ways does it fall short?
25. What are some of the biggest challenges that you face as a teacher here at [Legacy]?
26. What are some things that make working at [Legacy] enjoyable? What about not so enjoyable?
27. In your opinion, what makes [LEGACY] different from other school?
28. What changes are [Legacy] going through right now? In your mind, how do these compare to changes in the past.
29. How do you envision [Legacy] of the future?

## **Interview Guide**

### **Alumni**

1. For my records only, can you please state your name.
2. Please tell me your age, gender, race, and when you attended [Legacy].
3. Tell me a little bit about your background.
4. When you attended [Legacy], did you live in this community? If not, where did you live.
5. If you still live in this area, why did you stay? If not, why did you leave?
6. In general, what are some of the things that you think influences a students’ experience at school? What does it take for students to be successful?

7. When someone mentions [Legacy] High School, what comes to mind? Please describe it using words or imagery, however you like.
8. When you think of the word “community” what comes does that mean to you? What about “community-school”?
9. Can you please tell me about your school experience when you attended [Legacy]. What was your perception of the academic aspect of your high school? What about the social aspect? What stands out for you as you reflect on your time there?
10. Was [Legacy] the only high school that you went to? If you attended more than one high school, what was different about [Legacy] than at the other schools?
11. Tell me about the people who worked at [Legacy] when you were there? Did any of the teachers, administrators, or faculty/staff member make your time there memorable? How so? This can be positively or negatively.
12. Tell me about students at [Legacy] when you were there? Are you still familiar with the school? Tell me about the students who are there now?
13. Overall did you or did you not enjoy attending [Legacy] when you were there? Looking back, is there anything you would have done differently to change your experience at [Legacy]?
14. Are you familiar with the changes that [Legacy] has made over the years and implementing now? How do you feel about those changes? Which of those changes do you deem to be most beneficial? What about least beneficial.
15. [Legacy] is now a community school that offers wrap around services to its students and community members. Was [Legacy] a community school when you were there? If so, what would you say about the services and resources that were offered? If not, how are these services and resources different than what was offered at [Legacy] when you were there? What do you think about these differences?
16. Do you have children or family member that currently attend [Legacy]? If you are familiar with their experiences, can you compare what you know of their [Legacy] experiences with the experiences that you had there?
  - i. IF THEY HAVE CHILDREN THERE NOW...
    1. Now, can you please tell me about your child’s experiences at school? Would you say that your child is having a successful time? Why or why not?

2. How/why did you choose [Legacy] for your child? Did you make any special effort to get your child in this school? If so, why?
  3. From a parent's perspective, how do you feel about [Legacy] High School? Does [Legacy] offer everything that you expect from a school for your child? If yes, what are those things? If not, what is it lacking?
  4. How/why did you choose [Legacy] for your child? Did you make any special effort to get your child in this school? If so, why?
  5. From a parent's perspective, how do you feel about [Legacy] High School? Does [Legacy] offer everything that you expect from a school for your child? If yes, what are those things? If not, what is it lacking?
  6. How would you say that attending [Legacy] has impacted your child? What about you or the other people in your household/family?
  7. What is your perception of the teachers, staff, and administrators of your child's school? Do you consider them uniquely special in any kind of way?
  8. How do you view other parents and students at [Legacy]? Do you interact with them? Who would you describe the family, school, and community interactions at [Legacy].
  9. Overall, what are the things about [Legacy] that you are satisfied with? What are you not satisfied with?
  10. If you had to send another child to high school, would you choose [Legacy]? Why or why not?
- 
2. If you were in charge of [Legacy] what are some things that you keep the same? What are some things that you would do differently?

## **Interview Guide**

### **Parent**

1. For my records only, can you please state your name?
2. Please state your age range, gender, and race.
3. How many children do you have and what are their ages and grades? Of all of your children, have all of them attended [Legacy]? If not, can you please tell me a little bit about those different decisions for where you sent your child to school?
4. Can you please tell me a little about your background?
5. Do you live in this community? If so, for how long? If not where do you live?
6. If you do not live near [Legacy], can you please tell me what made you choose [Legacy] for your child?
7. What do you think is needed for children to be successful at school?
8. Now, can you please tell me about your child's experiences at school? Would you say that your child is having a successful time? Why or why not?
9. How/why did you choose [Legacy] for your child? Did you make any special effort to get your child in this school? If so, why?
10. From a parent's perspective, how do you feel about [Legacy] High School? Does [Legacy] offer everything that you expect from a school for your child? If yes, what are those things? If not, what is it lacking?
11. When you think of the word "community" what does that mean to you? What about "community-school"?
12. What is your understanding of a community-school? Did you know what a community school was prior to your children attending [Legacy]?
13. What is different about [Legacy] from other schools that your child could have attended?
14. How would you say that attending [Legacy] has impacted your child? What about you or the other people in your household/family?
15. What is your perception of the teachers, staff, and administrators of your child's school? Do you consider them uniquely special in any kind of way?
16. How do you view other parents and students at [Legacy]? Do you interact with them? Who would you describe the family, school, and community interactions at [Legacy]?



17. Overall, what are the things about [Legacy] that you are satisfied with? What are you not satisfied with?

18. If you had to send another child to high school, would you choose [Legacy]? Why or why not?